



# WHITE COLLAR

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

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## Barack Obama Returns Hope to Working Americans



Barack Obama addresses the nation, and the world, after being sworn in as 44th President of the United States. The OPEIU made an unprecedented effort to get-out-the-vote for the Obama-Biden ticket and joined working people and their unions to increase Democratic majorities in both houses of Congress. As a result, government of the people, by the people and for the people is about to get back on track. For the first time in eight years, working people have the White House on their side. See inside for more about the inauguration of President Obama and what it means for working families.

## OPEIU Joins in Fight for Employee Free Choice Act

OPEIU members joined a crowd of almost 4,000 people to launch labor's drive to pass the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), with a boisterous outdoor D.C. rally on February 4.

The crowd was standing among boxes named by state and symbolizing the 1.4 million cards, letters and e-mails sent to Congress. Workers in their work uniforms took the boxes, two for each state, and led a march to the

Senate office buildings to deliver the million member mobilization petitions that urged passage of the EFCA.

"OPEIU was a major participant in this rally because we know the only way this country is going to recover economically is if we restore the middle working class, and the Employee Free Choice Act is a vital step toward making that happen," said International President Michael Goodwin. The OPEIU has

contributed \$100,000 to the AFL-CIO's media campaign on this issue through the American Rights at Work, a group whose mission is to advance democracy in the workplace.

And with a backer of the bill, President Barack Obama, now sitting in the White House, its lead 2009 congressional sponsors, Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, and House Education and Labor Committee Chairman

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# Editorial



## An Experience of a Lifetime!

By Michael Goodwin, International President

**M**ore than two million people had the privilege of attending the historic inauguration of President Barack Obama on January 20, 2009, in Washington, D.C., and among them was an OPEIU delegation of more than 20 members.

It was a very cold day, yet no one seemed to notice. They were so excited about attending an event of such magnitude, broadcast throughout the world, and likely to be repeatedly shown for years to come. They traveled from Georgia, Illinois, New Jersey, New York and Wisconsin. They were determined to be there, despite the difficulties of dealing with long lines to enter, inaccessibility of restroom facilities and the crush of the crowd. Yet, not one of them complained and all have reported what a privilege it was to be there on that historic day!

Delegates attending were from Local Unions 32 and 35, Guild 45 and Local Union 153, along with OPEIU Vice President Green P. Lewis, Jr. and Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin A. Kistler. Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Wohlforth participated in the inaugural parade on behalf of the AFL-CIO constituency group, Pride at Work. Domingo Roman, spouse of OPEIU employee Victoria Tirado-Roman, served as coordinator for the delegation, making sure that the plans to attend the event went smoothly.

**The OPEIU members who attended will never forget that they had the privilege and high honor of observing the inauguration of the 44th President of the United States.**

The OPEIU delegation was housed at the National Labor College (NLC) in Silver Spring, Maryland. On the day of the inauguration, the city of Washington was closed to privately owned vehicles; only commercial vehicles with a special tag were allowed into the city, such as buses, taxis and limos. The main means of access was the city's subway system, the Metro. You can imagine what that experience was like when you think about two million people trying to get to the same place at the same time on a system designed to handle substantially fewer people! That's why the delegation was awakened at 4 a.m. on January 20 to start their trek from the NLC to the Metro. After a not to be forgotten trip on the Metro, they arrived on the mall shortly after 6 a.m. to queue up for admission to the inauguration site.

What was very noticeable was the camaraderie of the people. It is almost unheard of to bring two million people together in a very tight situation and not have problems. Yet, the Washington police reported that, astonishingly, not one arrest was made that day! As President Obama has said so many times, "there are no red states or blue states; we are the United States of America." And his assessment clearly showed its truth on Inauguration Day. People of all races, religions and cultures from across the country came together and acted in peace, respect and love of country.

The OPEIU members who attended will never forget that they had the privilege and high honor of observing the inauguration of the 44th President of the United States.

President Obama went right to work immediately following his inauguration and has clearly accomplished many things in a short time. He invited the leaders of the labor movement to attend a White House ceremony on Friday, January 30, 2009 in the East Room to witness the signing of three labor-related Executive Orders: Non Displacement of Qualified Workers Under Service Contracts, Notification of Employee Rights Under Federal Labor Laws and Economy in Government Contracting. All of these Executive Orders have a beneficial effect for working families.

He also graciously invited the leaders to a reception in the Blue Room of the White House to thank them and the members of the unions who worked so hard to get him elected. He stated that he didn't believe he could have been elected without the help and support of the millions of union members across the United States. Vice President Biden also attended the reception with the labor leaders and extended a warm welcome to the White House after eight years of absence. He said, "We welcome you in out of the cold."

The president is fully aware and has adopted the principle that in order for the economy to improve, we must immediately start the process of rebuilding the middle class. He also believes that to rebuild the middle class, workers' right to bargain for improved wages and working conditions is at the center of that effort. That's why he is anxiously awaiting the passage of the Employee Free Choice Act so that he can sign it and the rebuilding can begin. The bill was introduced in Congress on March 10, 2009 as H.R. 1409 and S. 560.

Along with the recently passed Stimulus bill, and the soon to be passed Employee Free Choice Act, the economy will be well on its way to recovery!

## Goodwin Meets with President Obama

International President Michael Goodwin meets with President Barack Obama in the Blue Room of the White House immediately following the president's signature on three Executive Orders on January 30, 2009. The president invited all national presidents of AFL-CIO unions to attend the signing.



## Local 537 Celebrates Obama Win



Local 537 members at Carpenters Southwest Administrative Corporation's Claims Department in Pasadena, California, wearing their OPEIU/Obama pins, gather to celebrate Barack Obama's historic presidential election, and how working people banded together and made this election possible.

## The OPEIU Honor Roll

In celebration of the historic election of Barack Obama as President of the United States, many OPEIU local union employers closed for business on Inauguration Day and gave their employees an unscheduled paid holiday.

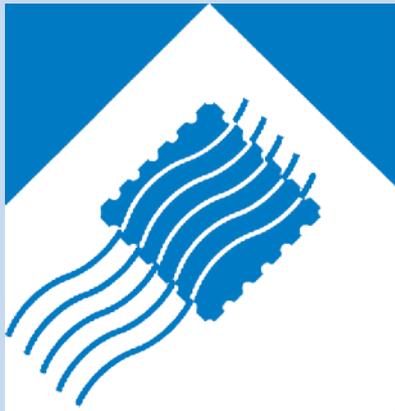
The OPEIU would like to recognize its OPEIU Honor Roll of employers:

Local Union	Employer
Local 5	International Union of Elevator Constructors, Local 25 Denver Firefighters' Local 858 OPEIU Local 5 Colorado Labor Advocate Communications Workers of America, District 7 AFT Colorado Allied Workers #28 AFSCME Council 76
Local 153	Amalgamated Lithographers Local 1 NY Metro Area Postal Union NYC Central Labor Council Transport Workers of America UFCW Local 342 Actor's Equity Association Local 237
Local 1794	OPEIU Local 1794 Local 420, UAW North Shore AFL-CIO Millwright/Piledriver Local 1871

# Letters to the Editor

## Dear President Goodwin:

As you know, I ran this year as an Independent against entrenched Republican



Again, we reprint letters from our members on various issues. We invite our readers to continue to share their opinions with us, whether in support of or in opposition to our own. Debate is healthy and welcomed in this union. Letters are edited for length only, not content. Remember: Anonymous letters will not be printed.

You can also reach us on the web:  
[www.opeiu.org](http://www.opeiu.org)

Hal Rogers for the Kentucky 5th District U.S. House of Representatives seat. Rogers was otherwise unopposed because no Democrat entered the race. The generous J.B. Moss Voice of the Electorate Fund (VOTE) contribution to my campaign helped me very much in getting my name and message out to the voters in our 29-county district in largely rural southeast Kentucky, and I remain very grateful for this support.

I was 18 percent of the vote on November 4 with a grassroots campaign effort. However, based on the vote for Democrats in this district and due to the prevalence of straight-ticket voting here, I believe I would

have gained significantly more votes had I not been on the ballot as an Independent.

Earlier this month, I changed my party registration and announced that I will run again for Congress in the 5th District in 2010, this time as a Democrat. I'm on record with firm commitments to the issues and legislation that are important to working Americans, and I won't back down from this stand. And I'm proud to say that I remain a member in good standing of OPEIU Local 109.

I am writing you to ask for OPEIU's endorsement in the 2010 race, and that my campaign be considered for a contribution from VOTE in 2009 in order to prepare for the Kentucky Democratic 2010 primary. Thank you for your consideration and support.

Fraternally,  
**Jim Holbert**

## Local Unions 29 & 537 Bargain Retiree Health Coverage



The bargaining team at Local Unions 29 and 537.

These days at the collective bargaining table, union negotiators are faced with cutbacks and discussions of employee cost sharing when the topics of health benefits are on the table. It's becoming more and more difficult to successfully negotiate new retiree health care benefits for members.

In 1999, the Collective Bargaining Agreement between Local Unions 29 and 537 and the California Federation of Teachers had a provision for the parties to

discuss retiree health benefits.

In light of the economy and the increasing cost of health care benefits, the Local Unions' members were determined to secure retiree health benefits, despite the fact that they had proposed retiree benefits coverage in past negotiations with no success. Now was the time to hold firm and fight for what is right.

Since the employer provided retiree health coverage to employees outside of OPEIU members, securing the benefits was just the right thing to do. Local Unions 29 and 537 successfully negotiated, for employees who retire between the ages of 55 and 65 with a minimum of 15 years of service, health premiums paid to their union trust fund for the same health care benefit package that is available to active employees. The benefit was enhanced to offer the benefit to employees who retire in the year 2009 with 10 years of service. For employees retiring with at least 15 years of service and upon eligibility for Medicare, contribution for health care will be limited to the employee only and the employer will pay for Medicare Part B at the standard rate plus an annual maximum of \$2,500 for a supplemental policy.

The contract was effective January 1, 2009.

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# OPEIU Joins in the Fight for Employee Free Choice Act

(Continued from page 1)

George Miller, D-Calif. vowed to get it to his desk this year.

Ailing Senate Labor Committee Chairman Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., handed Harkin the job of shepherding the bill through the upper chamber, which will be tough.

To do so, labor must overcome a virulent and well-financed business disinformation campaign against the bill. This bill would help level the playing field between workers and bosses in organizing drives and in bargaining for first contracts. Business wants to garner 41 senators — mostly Republicans — to filibuster it to death.

The bill would aid workers by legalizing majority sign-up — automatic recognition of the union in a workplace when a majority of workers signs authorization cards — and that's one piece of ground the campaign will be fought on.

Business has launched a multi-million dollar ad drive saying that majority sign-up would take away “secret ballot elections” for or against unionization, without discussing its rampant labor law-breaking — detailed at the rally — in campaigns before such votes.

And as virtually every union speaker, led by Steelworkers President Leo Gerard, said, the legislation would still permit union recognition elections or majority sign-up. “But it would leave the decision in the hands of the workers, not the bosses,” he added.

Besides majority sign-up, the Employee Free Choice Act would impose hefty fines for labor law-breaking and binding arbitration if labor and management can't reach a first contract within 120 days of starting bargaining. And it would make it easier to get federal court injunctions against persistent labor law-breakers, such as Wal-Mart.

Business law-breaking — from illegal firings, to threats of pay freezes to illegal threats to close plants, was a key theme of the rally. Majority sign-up, the law's supporters say, would short-circuit business' chance at such campaigns.

Sara Steffens, a Newspaper Guild-CWA member, who was a lead organizer for the union at the *Contra Costa (Calif.) Times*, told a typical story: The union got two-thirds of the newsroom to sign authorization cards. Then trouble started.

The extremely anti-union large Singleton

newspaper chain that owns the *Contra Costa* paper “hired an anti-union ‘consultant,’ threatened there would be a wage freeze and layoffs if we voted for the union, and called people in again and again” for anti-union meetings, she explained. The union won, and three weeks later the paper fired 29 people — many of them organizing drive leaders — including Steffens. That's illegal.

Businesses, in their campaigns against the law, “act as if they're speaking up for democracy — and they're not,” added Communications Workers President Larry Cohen.

“Workers need the Employee Free Choice Act so we can solve problems in our workplace and not get fired if we stick our necks out for our rights,” Steffens added.

It's also a matter of respect on the job, and of giving workers a say in dividing up the proceeds from their own hard work and productivity, which has soared in recent years, said Theresa Gares, a bus driver from Toms River, N.J., who was a key organizer of her shop for the Transport Workers Union.

“They don't want us to have a voice in our companies. We're told: ‘You're just a bus driv-

er and you're a dime a dozen.’ We run the company. We run it smoothly. Why can't we have a piece of the pie?” she asked.

Unionists had another message for lawmakers for their nationwide campaign: It would help restore the middle class and also help pull the country out of its present economic crash. Gerard, the rally's emcee, said the law is even more needed now “because the nation is in economic free-fall.”

Harkin, reading a long list of progressive laws labor pushed through over the years to create and aid the U.S. middle class — Social Security, Medicare, civil rights acts, the minimum wage, OSHA, the Mine Safety and Health Act, workers' comp and more — said the Employee Free Choice Act would join those in restoring workers' bargaining power and incomes. But he warned “we had to fight for every one of those, and we'll have to fight for this also. I'm here to ask you to turn up the heat.

“I'm also here to state the obvious: It's better to bargain collectively than to beg individually,” the Iowan, son of a coal miner, added.

## American Labor Museum Presents Sol Stetin Awards

The American Labor Museum/Botto House National Landmark recently honored Richard Hughes, International President of the International Longshoremen's Association, Susan McGarry Basso, Associate Vice President of Human Resources at Seton Hall University and Perry Rosenstein, President of Gladys Miller-Rosenstein and Executive Director of The Puffin Foundation Ltd. at the 26th Annual Sol Stetin Awards Dinner. The award honors individuals for their significant contribution to improving the lives of working people.

The event, held November 20, 2008, celebrated the 25th anniversary of the American Labor Museum and the centennial of the Botto House National Landmark.



OPEIU International President and American Labor Museum/Botto House National Landmark President Michael Goodwin, Sol Stetin Award honorees Susan McGarry Basso and Richard Hughes, and Museum Director Angelica Santomauro. Not pictured is award recipient Perry Rosenstein.

## Local 494 Elects New Board

Pictured is the newly elected Executive Board of Local 494 in Detroit, Michigan. Left to right are Lydia Scott-Barnes, Sergeant-at-Arms; Maria Catalfio, Board Member at Large; Debbie Armour, Secretary-Treasurer; Tonya Perry and Kathy Nestor, Trustees; Kris Bucci, President; Joe Mason, Board Member at Large; Audrey McKenna, Vice President; Laura Winiarski, Trustee; and Karen McCarthy, Recording Secretary.



## Local 2001 Wins \$2 Million in Back Pay and \$2 Million in Wage Increases at TVA

OPEIU has represented certain white collar employees at the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), a federal agency, for more than 50 years. TVA is one of only a few federal agencies where the Union is permitted to negotiate over wages; if the parties fail to reach an agreement on issues such as wage rates, the contract calls for final and binding arbitration. This is what happened when an agreement couldn't be reached in the summer of 2007 for the fiscal year 2008, resulting in a decision that means total back pay of more than \$2 million and wage increases of another \$2 million annually.

OPEIU appealed to mediation, and the mediator was unable to get the parties to change positions so OPEIU filed for arbitration. After seven months of delay, TVA finally participated in the selection and appointment of a three-member arbitration panel.

Local 2001 Business Representative and

OPEIU International Vice President Phillip Pope presented the Union's case at arbitration. "This case could not have been won without the tremendous amount of preparation time and the knowledge, skills and assistance from OPEIU Senior International Representative Faye Headrick. Faye was the OPEIU's only witness and did an excellent job in convincing the arbitration panel of why the OPEIU should win," said Pope.

Pope also acknowledges the help of the negotiating committee consisting of Linda Hutcheson, Glenn Taylor, Sheila King and Kathleen Stringfield. Pope says the TVA membership continues to give excellent support to the Local 2001 leadership. "The OPEIU has always been in the forefront in taking on tough issues and saying 'no' to the employer when we feel the employer's final offer is not sufficient," says Hutcheson. "When the Union fights for the members, it's not too hard for the members to sup-

port the Union leadership," added King.

The arbitration hearing was held September 2-3, 2008, and in the decision the arbitration panel ordered TVA to increase the wages of certain employees by 5.92 percent retroactive to the last pay period in September 2007.

Additionally, OPEIU convinced the arbitration panel that TVA was charging employees too much for health and dental insurance (TVA is self-insured). Employees will have their health insurance contributions reduced for two of the three plans available to them as a result of the arbitrator's decision. This will be a savings of up to \$138 per month for some employees.

Local 2001 has also appealed to arbitrate the dispute over wage rates and insurance premiums for fiscal year 2009. Negotiating committee members Stringfield and Taylor both agree that they are only seeking "what is fair for those we represent."

## Local 295 Ratifies New Contract

Members of Local 295 employed at Domtar Corporation pulp mill in Baileyville, Maine recently ratified a new four-year agreement. The new collective bargaining agreement provides solid wage increases, a large jump in the pension benefit and offered a sign-on bonus for employees.

The pension benefit multiplier increased

\$5 in the first year of the agreement. The wage increases were 2.5, 2, 2.5 and 2 percent for the four years.

The contract also enhanced flexibility, which has helped the company survive in an industry that has seen a number of large mills close down. Local 295 President Gerald Greenlaw has been a long-time member of the union and employee at the mill. He served

as the chief negotiator for the contract.

Local 6 Senior Business Agent Tracy Monahan also attended negotiations and assisted the local leadership. For many years, Local 6 has provided assistance to Local 295.

Local 295 Vice President Laurie Clark and Kathy Craig served as negotiators on the committee.

## OPEIU Winners and Mentors Honored in 2008 Union Leaders of the Future Scholarships

**L**arraine Andreoni of Albuquerque, New Mexico and OPEIU Local 251, and Breana Malloy of Corriganville, Maryland and OPEIU Local 2 have been selected as winners in the 2008 Union Plus Union Leaders of the Future Scholarship Program.

Many of this year's scholarship recipients have been paired with mentors from the union leadership, including two from OPEIU. Malloy is being mentored by OPEIU Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Wohlforth. Becky Turner, President of Local 277, is also honored to serve as a mentor to one of this year's winners. The education, knowledge and wisdom the scholarship recipients gain from their mentors will help them emerge as more effective leaders in representing the interests of working people.

This year's OPEIU winners are among 13 women and people of color, representing nine unions, who are receiving nearly \$36,000 in scholarships.

"We are very proud of all our honorees and how they represent the increasing diversity of the American labor movement," said Leslie Tolf, President of Union Privilege, the AFL-CIO-founded organization that administers the scholarship program. "We know the winners of today are the leaders of tomorrow."

Mentors and mentees will have regular meetings and discussions. Mentors will answer questions, provide career advice, and help make sure that the rich tradition and history of the union movement are carried on in the next generation of leaders.

### About this Year's OPEIU Winners

Andreoni, who is pursuing degrees from Capella University in Minneapolis and the National Labor College, has been widely honored for her volunteer work and community service. She was even named "Most Inspirational Woman" by her local United Way. But Andreoni feels that the way she can help people most effectively is by advancing her education and serving in the union leadership. "The workforce needs its leaders to fight in unity for equal rights, benefits and labor standards," she says. "I aim to be one of those unifying voices in leadership, and work toward labor fairness, prosperity and a better standard of living for all union members."

Malloy is equally committed to the interests of union members and families. "The greatest satisfaction and professional fulfillment I will ever have in life will arise from helping hardworking men and women," she says. Currently pursuing a Juris Doctorate from Cleveland-Marshall School of Law, she notes that her leadership education began two years ago during the AFL-CIO Labor 2006 campaign. "I learned more, worked harder and stepped farther outside my comfort zone than I ever had before." Malloy plans to concentrate on labor and employment law to help further her own goals and those of the labor movement.

### About the Union Leaders of the Future Scholarship Program

The Union Leaders of the Future Scholarship Program is open to union members, leaders and staff. The program provides annu-

al awards of up to \$3,000 to union women and people of color to help cover the cost of continuing their education or training in order to pursue their union career goals and enhance their leadership skills. Scholarships are funded by the Union Plus Education Foundation and can be used for tuition, books and travel for leadership training at accredited labor schools, colleges, universities and community colleges.

Union Plus Education Foundation receives funding from HSBC, the issuer of the Union Plus Credit Card. Since 1992, more than \$2.5 million has been awarded through a range of Union Plus scholarship programs.

Applicants for scholarships are evaluated for union leadership potential. Important factors include career goals, social awareness and financial need. Scholarship winners are selected by a consultant who is a career professional with extensive experience in union scholarship programs. The AFL-CIO Civil Rights & Women's Committees ratify winners and award amounts.

Union Plus is grateful for the contributions of this year's two experienced OPEIU mentors. Nancy Wohlforth has been a leader in the union for more than 25 years and serves on the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO. Becky Turner has been a member of Local 277 since 1978 and currently serves as its President and Business Manager. She is also an OPEIU Vice President. Each has extraordinary leadership skills, knowledge and insights to impart to her mentee.

### 2009 Applications

Union members who are women or people of color, and who are interested in receiving applications for the 2009 Union Leaders of the Future Scholarship Program, may register at [www.UnionPlus.org/DiversityScholarship](http://www.UnionPlus.org/DiversityScholarship). Qualified individuals may also send a postcard with their name, return address, telephone number and international union name to: Union Leaders of the Future Scholarship Program, c/o Union Privilege, P.O. Box 34800, Washington, DC 20043-4800.



(Left to right) Local 277 President/Business Manager Becky Turner and Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Wohlforth are pictured with scholarship winner and Local 2 member Breana Malloy of Corriganville, Maryland and Union Privilege Communications Director and Local 2 member Jennifer Dorr. Not pictured is scholarship winner and Local 251 member Larraine Andreoni.

## Local 459 Nurses Improve Staffing Language for All Employees at IRMC

Short staffing is a problem at every hospital these days. After a number of other approaches were tried, the RN's at Ingham Regional Medical Center (IRMC) in Lansing, Michigan who are represented by Local 459 decided they had to have specific staffing language in their contract. The hospital said this was never going to happen and, during bargaining in 2005, declared that they would not even consider adding staffing tables to the contract. A 17-day strike was held and the final contract included grids that required RN and ancillary staffing for inpatient units based on patient census.

Over the life of the contract problems with the contract language became apparent. There were no staffing requirements for the non-inpatient units. The contract called for a \$200 penalty whenever the hospital did not meet the staffing, but an arbitrator ruled that penalty only applied when the hospital did not have the correct number of RNs. This left no penalty when IRMC short staffed ancillary staff such as the nursing assistants. The \$200 was modeled after one used by a different local hospital. The funds went into an account that each department could use for departmental needs. It soon became apparent that this didn't work at IRMC. The money was put into the account but not spent, and amounted to nothing more than a paper shuffle for the hospital. The Local 459 RN bargaining team began negotiations in 2008 with the intent to improve the language and they did just that.

Bargaining on a new RN contract concluded the afternoon the prior agreement was set to expire. The new contract added staffing requirements for the operating room, the recovery room and the same-day surgery unit. The teams were unable to find a formula for the emergency department and a special committee is continuing to work on that.

The \$200 penalty will now be paid if any staff is missing, including the ancillary staff. And the penalty will now be paid in



The Local 459 RN bargaining team.

wages instead of going into a fund. The ancillary staff is also represented by Local 459. In a spirit of solidarity, the RN's negotiated language that requires the hospital to split the penalty up among all of the Union employees working on that day, RN and non RN. The team knew that when one employee is not present, it affects all of the other employees. So if a nurse or a nursing assistant is missing, \$200 will be divided between the nurses and nursing assistants who are working.

The new contract should motivate the hospital to provide the proper staff. If they do not, every employee working will be compensated. The RN contract impacts the non RNs in a positive way. This probably would not have happened if both groups were not organized and represented by OPEIU.

This agreement was well-received and it was ratified by a vote of 212 to 11. The Local 459 team consisted of Pat Davidson, Tasinda Ridsdale, Kelly Wilcox, Carol Hines, Elizabeth Gray, Lee Hartman and Vicki Weaver. They were assisted by Local 459 Service Representative and OPEIU Vice President Cindy Jeffries.

## 2009 Catalog Offers Books for Union Activists, Leaders

A new, 56-page catalog of books for union members, activists and leaders is being offered by Union Communication Services, Inc. The 2009 edition of the UCS Labor Books Catalog includes more than 125 classic and new

titles on topics ranging from negotiating and grievance handling to organizing, health and safety, labor law and labor history. It includes many worker-friendly fiction and young adult and children's books as well.

Copies are available free from UCS at 1-800-321-2545; by e-mail at [ucsbooks@unionist.com](mailto:ucsbooks@unionist.com), or on the web at [www.unionist.com](http://www.unionist.com). Or, send your request to UCS Books, 165 Conduit St., Annapolis, MD 21401.

**For more information about the OPEIU,  
visit our website at  
[www.opeiu.org](http://www.opeiu.org)**

## Taxi Strike Averted at Yellow, Checker and Star

The 1,600 Las Vegas taxi drivers at Yellow, Checker and Star Cab Companies recently averted a strike when the companies and the drivers' union, the Industrial Technical and Professional Employees Union (ITPE) OPEIU Local 4873, accepted a settlement proposal made by a federal mediator, ITPE President John Conley announced.

The negotiations were conducted under the auspices of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

The companies originally made a demand requiring the drivers to pay for a portion of fuel costs by increasing trip charges. The companies also insisted that the union agree to a waiver of Nevada's minimum wage law amendment. The minimum wage waiver would have allowed the companies to include tips as part of the bi-weekly minimum wage calculations.

Following a strike vote on October 8, the companies withdrew the fuel cost proposal, but the companies' minimum wage waiver demand remained. The waiver was not included in the mediator's recommendation for a settlement, however, leading to a breakthrough in the deadlock. With the settlement, Yellow, Checker and Star remain the only known commission-based taxi companies in the United States where the drivers do not have to pay for fuel.

The drivers also won the following in the contract settlement:

- Four weeks vacation after 12 years of service.
- Increased matching contributions to the 401(k) plan to 1.75 percent.
- Increases in the annual bonus totaling 24 percent over 3 years.

- An increase to \$7/\$8 per day for the special services and elite fleet drivers.

- Elite fleet drivers working three hours per day will receive a 21 percent increase.

Other improvements were made in the areas of health care eligibility, safety bonuses, accident offenses, warning letters, grievance filings, waiting time, lunch breaks and bid postings.

The drivers voted by secret ballot on November 1, 2008 and approved the settlement offer by a significant margin. The contract expires in November 2012.



**ITPE OPEIU Local 4873 members vote by secret ballot, approving the settlement offer by a significant margin and averting a strike. Also pictured are ITPE President John Conley, Representative T. Ruthie Jones and International Vice President Green P. Lewis, Jr.**

## Gene Brazee Celebrates 50 Years as a Local 39 Member

On September 2, 2008, former Credit Union National Association, Inc. (CUNA) member, Eugene (Gene) Brazee, celebrated his 50th Anniversary as a Local 39 member. Brazee worked in the mailroom at CUNA, Inc. for 32 years until his retirement in September 1990.

Brazee was a former Trustee of the Local and a member of the CUNA, Inc. bargaining committee for many years. Because he had so much bargaining experience, he was asked to negotiate a contract for clerical workers in the Madison Labor Temple. In fact, CUNA, Inc. gave him a week off to do so. Mike Bergenske of Facilities said, "Gene always had a handle on the issues and was very good at influencing management to buy into a union proposal. Gene's example as a union leader was very influential in getting me involved with Local 39."

Brazee attended his first union membership meeting in the newly-built Madison Labor Temple in September 1958 and has

been a supporter of the Local Union ever since. Over the years, he said he appreciated the satisfaction of knowing he had a job to come to every day and that he knew what his benefits were and what they would be for the term of the contract. He said he continues to pay dues as a retiree because he feels it's important to "donate to the cause."

When asked what he would say to someone just starting out today, Brazee replied, "If you're going to be a part of the workforce, you better be in a union." He shared a story from his early years when the members at CUNA, Inc. authorized a strike. The issue was money — although it wasn't very much. Local 39 members walked the picket line in the wind and cold for two or three months. When they returned to work, the company had "cleaned house" in the management ranks and members have enjoyed a much better relationship with the company from that point on.

Brazee has donated some of his personal

items for the Madison Labor Temple display case. He provided a photograph from the 1962 OPEIU Convention with then Local 39 President, Bob Bond, and President Harry S. Truman. The local also has a pin from his participation as a delegate to the Convention.

Brazee is a lifelong resident of Madison, Wisconsin and enjoys fishing and spending time up North. He and his wife, Myrty, have three children and seven grandchildren. Local 39 wishes to extend its best wishes to Brazee, and thank him for his continued support and friendship.



**Local 39 Business Representative Debra Eveland presents membership award to Gene Brazee.**

## Local 1295 Kraft Foods Workers Have New Contract

**L**ocal 1295 represents workers at the Kraft Foods North America plant in Woburn, Massachusetts. These workers make gelatin and other flavors and ingredients that go into Kraft products. And now they have a new three-year collective bargaining agreement!

Last year, the executive board from Local 1295 contacted International Vice President Mary Mahoney to request assistance in helping them with aggressive company tactics. Mahoney assigned one of her own Local 6 staff members to assist and the two Local Unions have been working together since.

Recently negotiations began with paid time off, health insurance and wages topping the agenda for the negotiating committee. The committee spent 12 intense days in negotiations and was able to bring back a contract for the membership that included significant wage increases, two personal days and flexibility in vacation scheduling. The contract had required members to keep all their vacation time for use during a plant shutdown, but the new contract allows members to only have to save two weeks for that period and use the rest at their discretion.

The gains were critically important to the members, who feel that a healthy work-

life balance is necessary. The members of Local 1295 also successfully fought the company's attempts to institute mandatory overtime.

The membership ratified the agreement

thanks to the efforts of the negotiating committee: Chief Steward Ken Borden, Michael Crosbie, Ronald Fagner, John Laurina, Billy LeFave, Marc Masotta, Mike Mejias, and Local 6 Business Agent Tracy Monahan.



**The members of Local 1295 and Local 6 Business Agent Tracy Monahan. Pictured left to right are (front row) John Laurina, Michael Crosbie, Tracy Monahan, Ronald Fagner, Billy LeFave, (back row) Mike Mejias, Ken Borden and Marc Masotta.**

## Local 35 Members' Resounding Message: No Takeaways!

**M**embers of OPEIU Local 35, located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, ratified two contracts in December. The workers' voices at Ozaukee County and the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans (IFEBP) were heard loud and clear: NO TAKEAWAYS!

### **Ozaukee County**

By demonstrating solidarity at the table, members at Ozaukee County were able to avoid multiple concessions in health care, wages, and pension contributions, to name a few.

In addition to maintaining those benefits they already had, Ozaukee County workers were able to gain fair wage increases, stronger grievance language, increased wage protection, pay for days on which facilities are closed due to inclement weather, labor-management meetings, and

received back pay for an outstanding Union grievance.

Bargaining team member Elaine Carlson said, "I was very pleased with the professional attention our bargaining unit received. Our committee was firm in conveying what our membership wanted and the result was a good contract."

### **International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans**

Through a combination of solidarity at the table and on the shop floor, members of IFEBP were able to maintain all current health care benefits, in addition to winning stronger seniority provisions.

For many members, this was the first

time that they had participated in bargaining-related solidarity actions. Jan Lesperance, the Member-Coordinator of the Contract Action Team, said, "The Contract Action Team was invaluable to our contract negotiations. It provided a vehicle to organize our Union in a quick and timely manner so that management knew our Union was united. The CAT added new life and momentum to our negotiations." By standing united, workers at IFEBP were able to win a fair settlement.

Workers at both Ozaukee and IFEBP understand the power that they have, through their Union, to affect changes in their workplace. "I feel showing the company we were all going to stick together is the reason we were able to keep what we wanted most," Dave Dillon of IFEBP said.

## Solidarity Still Works: OPEIU Local 35 Joins UE Local 1110 in Fight with Republic Windows and Doors

On December 15, 2008, the Chicago labor community filled the hall of Teamsters Local 705 to celebrate the victory of UE Local 1110 in their fight against Republic Windows and Doors. When the occupation began a little over a week before, however, it wasn't apparent the workers would be so successful.

The fight began when the owners of Republic Windows and Doors laid off more than 200 members of UE Local 1110. The bosses claimed that Bank of America, which had just received more than \$25 billion in tax-payer financed bailout money, had cut off Republic's line of credit, leaving them without enough cash to pay the workers what they had already earned.

In making this decision, Republic chose to blatantly violate the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act. They failed to give the workers 60 days notice, were refusing to pay accrued vacation time or back wages, and retroactively cut off the health insurance benefits of their employees and families, despite making promises to the contrary.

Instead of letting themselves be abused by the bosses at Republic Windows and Doors, the members of UE Local 1110 made the brave decision to occupy their factory and force management to abide by federal law. It was the first time since the Great Depression that workers had taken such militant action.

OPEIU Local 35 Business Agents, Brian Reid and Christian Hains, were attending an annual fundraiser for a progressive, labor-oriented newspaper in Chicago when UE

Local 1110 President Armando Robles spoke about the need for support of his members' struggle. With representatives from Teamsters Local 743, SEIU Local 73, and various community groups, the Local 35 representatives drove to the factory in order to show solidarity with their Union sisters and brothers.

Having gained access inside Republic Windows and Doors during the occupation, the Local 35 Business Agents spent more than an hour with the workers and their families. "The atmosphere was electric," said Hains. "It was one of those moments in history when union members learned the real power that the working class has when we make the decision to take bold, collective action. I hope that organized labor is taking notes. I know I am."

Most importantly, UE Local 1110 members stuck together until they won their battle against Bank of America and Republic Windows and Doors. And from this victory, organized labor has an opportunity to learn from both the strategy and tactics taken by the UE members.

"This event clearly demonstrates why it is so important to belong to a Union," stated Reid. "On a practical level it also showed the synergy of an effective Union's three components: a unified and determined membership; steadfast rank-and-file leadership; and competent paid staffers coordinating activities. Without any one of them, the campaign would have been severely crippled."

And while labor can – and should – celebrate the wonderful achievements of the members of UE Local 1110, one thing remains clear: this victory does not mark the end of labor's struggle. Given the state of the American economy, and the pervasive anti-union climate in which we live, this victory, on the contrary, marks a beginning.

This beginning is a time when all Union members are realizing that, increasingly, we will have to fight to secure our wages and benefits. A time when we cannot take our Unions for granted. And, if we learn from this example, a time when we can rebuild organized labor into a fighting force for working people across America, and the world.

### Members Proudly Represent MAGE

The Michigan Department of Corrections' Honor Guard had the distinct honor to be selected to present a seminar titled "Honor Guard — Developing and Maintaining an Elite Unit" at the American Correctional Association 2009 Winter Conference in Kissimmee, Florida. MAGE member Sgt. Brent Mitchell of the Oaks Correctional Facility was selected as one of the representatives to speak at the ACA Winter Conference because of his knowledge, understanding, and service to the unit. Sgt. Mitchell's speech was on development, operation, and maintenance of the unit.

The Michigan Department of Corrections' Honor Guard has appeared in various locations throughout the State of Michigan as well as other national events in Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C. and Canada. At times, the costs of these appearances are the responsibility of the individual team members. The State was unable to furnish travel, hotel or meal expenses for Sgt. Mitchell. MAGE District 3 was able to donate \$250 to assist in defraying his personal expenses. District 3 Director Lt. Scott Nicewander and Deputy Director Capt. John Spencley agree that Sgt. Mitchell not only represents the Oaks Correctional Facility and the Michigan Department of Corrections in a professional manner, he is also an excellent representative of MAGE.



**Pictured left to right are District 3 Deputy Director Capt. John Spencley, Sgt. Brent Mitchell, and District 3 Director Lt. Scott Nicewander. All are members of MAGE.**



**Pictured are Local 35 Business Agents Christian Hains and Brian Reid flanked on the left and right by UE Local 1110 members.**

## OPEIU Mourns Loss of Richard Ellis and Joanne Finley

OPEIU is mourning the loss of two great union champions, Richard Ellis and Joanne Finley.



**Richard Ellis**

Richard Ellis, past president of the Government Supervisors Association of Florida/OPEIU Local 100 passed away on October 11, 2008.

“Richard will be greatly missed,” said International

President Michael Goodwin. “He was a true leader, a man who would put the interests of his members first and let it guide all his actions. OPEIU, and I personally, will miss his leadership and counsel.”

Joanne Finley, MD, MPH who was a trusted advisor and counsel to OPEIU passed away on October 15, 2008. Finley was the former New Jersey Commissioner of Health. Her husband Joe, was a former OPEIU General Counsel and once won a case in the Supreme Court regarding trade union employees’ right to form unions. His daughter, Lucinda, and he argued the case together, the first father/daughter to argue a

case before the Supreme Court. Joe Finley was also the author of the book, *White Collar Union, the Story of the OPEIU and its People*.

“Joanne spent her life devoted to public health, social justice and, perhaps most importantly, family,” said Goodwin. “She was also an invaluable counsel to the OPEIU, having advised us when we were organizing the Podiatrists Guild 45. She was a great doctor, an advocate for public health and a true friend to working families.

“Both Richard and Joanne will be greatly missed,” said Goodwin.

## Warner Bros. Celebrates Historic Inauguration by Outsourcing American Union Jobs!

From the studio that brought you such patriotic films as “Casablanca,” and “Yankee Doodle Dandee,” Warner Bros. announced on inauguration day, January 20, 2009, that many of their workers would no longer be welcomed within their family. Warner Bros. announced that hundreds of jobs, many held by long-term Local 174 members, will be lost to foreign entities. The company indicated these jobs might never return even if the studio rebounds.

All due to the word corporations live for: **OUTSOURCING.**

“This is a disgrace,” said Christine Page, Local 174 Business Representative and OPEIU International Vice President. “Jack Warner, the founder of the studio, made the socially conscious and patriotic films for the war effort and was pro-American in the media he oversaw. To see the jobs of long-term American workers being auctioned to the lowest bidder when the union workers have done nothing but give years of service to the company continues to be an American tragedy. Couple that with the salaries in the millions for the upper sphere of management and Warner Bros. has become the poster child for corporate greed.”

Manny Ortiz, Local 174 President agreed. “They are using the current economic downturn as the reason for their

actions. In the era of our new President and Secretary of Labor, this is their first shot across the bow and will be met by a determined fight from our side.” Ortiz continued by saying, “The profits of WB can best be described as robust in comparison to the rest of corporate America.”

Indeed, Warner Bros. ranked first in domestic box office sales in 2008. Executive pay, for a position such as chairman of Time Warner, has been more than \$30 million in the last few years in compensation.



**Christine Page, Local 174 Business Representative and OPEIU International Vice President (right) is pictured with Assistant Business Representative Lupe Salazar at Warner Bros.**

Warner Bros.’ strategy is to target some 800 people who earn far less and contribute to a steady tax base, work for their pension and health plans so that they can be self-sufficient in retirement, and support the infrastructure of the state and country. But that is not enough. Warner Bros.’ economic argument appears transparent, when again, the company confirmed the jobs, even in good times, would never come back.

“I am convinced this is about targeting the Hollywood unions. Show disrespect and contempt for the workers and you’re in business as far as the studio is concerned,” Page added. “This union was chartered in 1946 and never, never in the 31 years I have been a member or the 16 years I have been the business representative of Local 174, have I seen the unconscionable business practice of Warner Bros. on this issue. I represent other entertainment majors who have had their own difficult challenges throughout the decades, however, none of them have gone to this extent.”

The Union has filed grievances and requested immediate arbitration. The Union has also filed charges with the National Labor Relations Board over Warner Bros.’ outrageous action. It is also considering other options outside the Agreement. Updates will be provided in future issues of *White Collar*.

## Local 107 Reaches New Agreement for Helicopter Pilots at Air Logistics

On September 9, 2008, OPEIU Local 107 reached a tentative labor agreement with Bristow Group for a renewal labor contract for the GOM Pilots at Air Logistics, Inc. Subsequent to the membership meeting on October 31, the new 30-month agreement was overwhelmingly accepted by the pilots with an 85 percent approval rating.

The new contract provides for historic improvements to annual salaries, establishing a new gold standard for pilots flying in the GOM, including a compression of the wage tables in both the IFR and VFR categories. Entry level to top pay in the VFR category went from 20 years to 15 years, and IFR entry level from 30 years to 25 years. By way of example, the current salary of a 5-year VFR pilot immediately went from \$62,724 to

\$66,487 in annual pay; and will increase incrementally to \$81,281 on VFR pilots' anniversary date in 2010. Ten-year IFR pilots' current salary immediately improved from \$75,545 to \$80,078 in annual pay; and will incrementally increase to \$100,118 on IFR pilots' anniversary date in 2010. Major improvements to the wage tables for pilots flying in Alaska were also achieved.

In addition to the outstanding wage improvements for Local 107 represented pilots, the Union also saw substantial increases in all supplemental pay categories, e.g. \$100 per day for pilots removed from their assigned jobs, pay protection for pilots in the IFR cadre, pay for flight hours in excess of 35 hours per month, vacation selection improvements and stronger lan-

guage limiting the use of contract pilots.

All of this and more was completed in record time, without the intervention of the National Mediation Board. This is a shining example of what can be accomplished when the parties are committed to engage in good-faith negotiations to reach a fair agreement both sides can live with. It also exhibits a maturing of the union/management relationship, which resulted in a level of trust and mutual respect that made this remarkable bargaining achievement possible.

The Union's bargaining team consisted of Ken Bruner, President of Local 107, Kent Bollaert and Erica Green from the Local 107 Strategic Bargaining Committee, and OPEIU Senior International Representative Paul Bohelski.

## Local 102 Gets Significant Pay Raises in New Contract

Professional Helicopter Pilots Association (PHPA) Local 102 in Daleville, Alabama recently negotiated a new three-year contract with Lear Sigler, Inc. in Ft. Rucker, Ala. that means a 20.2 percent pay raise for starting members and a 4 percent raise for senior pilots, as well as a bonus that, depending on senior-

ity, could mean a pay increase of up to 5.5 percent. The contract covers 385 pilots.

"Our contract negotiations were very quick and efficient," said Local 102 President Steve Rush. "It was really due to the fact that we attended a course recently at Harvard University that outlined the steps to effective negotiating. It made it possible

for us to clear up a lot of things before we even sat down at the negotiating table, and made our negotiations run much smoother – and helped to ensure that we got what we were asking for on behalf of our members."

In addition to Rush, OPEIU Senior International Representative Paul Bohelski was instrumental in achieving the contract.

## PHPA Seeks Higher Safety Standards

Professional Helicopter Pilots Association (PHPA) representatives attended a National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) hearing on the safety of EMS helicopters, held February 3-6, 2009 in Washington, D.C. Attending the hearings were OPEIU Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin A. Kistler, Local 108 Pilot Al Duquette (PHI), Local 109 Representative Troy Montanez, Local 108 President Jeff Stackpole (AMC), OPEIU International President Michael Goodwin and Local 109 Pilot Dan McDade (AMC). The pilots are seeking higher safety standards through a NTSB report and recommendations.

Since 2004 there have been 55 crashes, resulting in the deaths of 77 people. According to ABCNews.com, "once the work of ground ambulances, these helicopters are now dispatched about 1,000 times each day...critics say that because Medicare and insurance companies are willing to pay up to \$10,000 a flight, it creates a strong business incentive for companies to perform as many flights as possible."

The NTSB said that four urgent recommendations they made three years ago have been ignored, including that med-evac choppers be equipped with night vision goggles and terrain detection equipment, for which there still is no FAA requirement. "Of the 55 accidents we looked at," said Robert Sumwalt, a member of the NTSB, "we found that 29 of those 55 could have been prevented if any of the four recommendations that we issued had been implemented."



(Left to right) OPEIU Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin A. Kistler, Local 108 Pilot Al Duquette (PHI), Local 109 Representative Troy Montanez, Local 108 President Jeff Stackpole (AMC), OPEIU International President Michael Goodwin and Local 109 Pilot Dan McDade (AMC).

## ALPA Conference Stresses Importance of Safety on the Job

Members of the Professional Helicopter Pilots Association (PHPA) attended the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA), International's 54th Annual Air Safety & Security Forum, held in Washington, D.C. The theme was "ALPA Pilots Advancing Air Safety & Security – Leadership at Work" and was a forum completely dedicated to advancing aviation safety and security.

PHPA President Butch Grafton and PHPA Council Member and IFALPA Helicopter Committee Vice Chairman Jeff Smith attended the forum, and they and OPEIU International President Michael Goodwin and Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin A. Kistler also attended the reception and awards banquet that honored flight crew members who have responded to challenging situations by demonstrating a high degree of professionalism and extraordinary flying skills. The ALPA Annual Air Safety Award & Aviation Security Award, the association's highest awards, were also presented.



(Left to right) OPEIU Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin A. Kistler, IFALPA President Carlos Limon, PHPA Council Member and Vice Chairman of the IFALPA Helicopter Committee Jeff Smith, PHPA President Butch Grafton, ALPA President John Prater, and OPEIU International President Michael Goodwin.

## Our Diversity Makes Us Strong!



Members of Local 30 in San Diego, California march in the 29th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Parade.

## New hope for working families: Obama in the White House

**A**lthough the national economic collapse shows few signs of improving, American workers look to 2009 with a measure of hope and confidence inspired by dynamic new leadership in Washington, DC.

Working people and their unions worked hard and spent much to elect the Obama-Biden ticket and to increase Democratic majorities in both houses of Congress.

As a result, government of the people, by the people, and for the people is about to get back on track. For the first time in eight years, working people have The White House on their side.

“Change” was the rallying cry for Sen. Barack Obama’s presidential campaign and his overwhelming election victory made it clear that change is what the American people are demanding. Tax policies no longer will favor the rich over the middle class, companies that ship jobs overseas no longer will get tax breaks, and trade agreements that fail to protect American workers won’t be signed.

Even before taking office, Obama moved decisively with his widely-heralded “Team of Rivals” Cabinet selections that rallied the stock market and made the international community think better of us. No “cronyism” or partisan politics for Obama. He chose the best and the brightest to get our economy moving forward and to shore up our military security with proponents of diplomacy rather than bluster.

Political pundits were stunned at his selection of Sen. Hillary Clinton as his Secretary of State after their lengthy and often bitter battle for the Democratic presidential nomination. It was a superb pick, one that nations around the world applauded, and typifies Obama’s commitment to putting the nation’s needs ahead of all other considerations.

By appointing three women and two African Americans to his top national security and foreign policy posts, Obama has a war cabinet that is the most diverse in recent history.

Although Obama inherits the worst fiscal situation of any President since Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933, he has his priorities in order. He first has to stop the economic bleeding and reverse the decline of the middle class.

As with FDR, he knows the way to stimulate the economy is to create jobs, to put money in the pockets of ordinary people. He proposed an \$800 billion stimulus package that will save or create 4 million jobs, rebuilding crumbling roads, bridges and other aging infrastructure. With the private sector so weakened by the recession, Obama observed that the federal government is the only entity left with the resources to jolt our economy back to life.

Also on the front burner is ending the war in Iraq, winning the war in Afghanistan, and solving the health care crisis.

Working families can expect a tax break from the Obama administration. He is proposing \$200 billion in middle class tax cuts and will re-regulate Wall Street to protect our sav-

ings, pensions and 401(k)s.

As we all know, Obama is a strong advocate of gender pay equity and supports expanding the Family and Federal Leave Act. He also aims to make higher education more affordable — it is shocking that college tuitions have risen more than 400 percent over the past two decades.

Perhaps the most important gain for workers is they get their Labor Department back. Created to “foster, promote and develop the welfare of the wage earners of the United States” the DOL in the Bush administration made a mockery of that mission.

From the day George W. took office, the DOL attacked worker rights. The department’s first action was to repeal regulations that protected workers from repetitive motion injuries. The Bush DOL not only issued a new rule exempting six million workers from the right to overtime pay but advised employers on how to exploit the new regulations. The Bush DOL reduced staff for protecting worker health but beefed up the shop that audits labor unions.

Bush appointees to the National Labor Relations Board turned that vehicle for worker rights into a tool for anti-union employers. “There has been a series of one-sided rulings by this Bush board,” said William Gould IV, a Stanford University law professor and former NLRB chair in the Clinton administration. Such as a 2006 ruling that broadened the definition of supervisor, excluding as many as eight million workers from joining unions.

“If we are going to rebuild our middle class and have a sustained recovery of living standards, workers must have the freedom to form unions as a counterweight to corporate power, as a way to bargain for a better life,” said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney.

When FDR introduced the National Labor Relations Act in 1935, his premise was that workers needed labor organizations and collective bargaining to put more dollars in their pockets and stimulate the economy. Hard to believe that some 70 years later America has a similar problem.

Polls show that millions of workers would join unions if they were protected from retaliation from employers. This helps explain why the Employee Free Choice Act—which then-Sen. Obama co-sponsored—is another priority of the new administration. The EFCA, sometimes called “the card-check bill,” would certify a union if a majority of employees in a unit sign cards designating the union as their bargaining representative. Big business and their dwindling GOP allies in the Congress promise an all-out battle to defeat card check.

One thing we can be sure of: In an Obama administration, unions are going to have a voice, a strong voice, speaking up for workers in a constantly-shifting economy.

That makes 2009 a challenge for all of us.

## Strong Unions will Help U.S. Recovery

By Jesse Jackson

The economic news gets ever more frightening. America's pride—the broad middle class—now seems as endangered as its auto companies.

That's why the Employee Free Choice Act is so vital. Slated to be introduced in both houses of Congress today, Employee Free Choice revives the right to organize and bargain collectively in America.

That right has effectively been trampled over the last 30 years. President Reagan first opened up all-out warfare on unions. Companies learned they could get away with suppressing labor organizers—firing, threatening or intimidating them in flagrant violation of the law. At worst, companies would face a slap on the wrist years after the violations.

Unions once represented about 30 percent of the labor force, and labor contracts helped set the bar that raised union and non-union wages and conditions. Now labor represents only about 7.5 percent of private-sector employees—despite that fact that a majority of workers say they would like a union on the job if they could get one.

Over the past eight years, we witnessed the devastating results. From 2001 to 2008, the economy grew, profits rose, CEO

salaries soared, but wages didn't keep up with prices. The median household income—the income in the middle of the income scale—lost \$2,000 over the decade. Families took on record debts—second mortgages, home-equity loans, refinancing, consumer and credit-card loans—to keep their heads above water. That was central to the financial bubble that now has burst, torpedoing the global economy.

So a central question in the recovery is: What changes do we make to insure that we don't go back to an economy in which the few capture all the rewards, and the many fall further behind?

That will take many reforms, but at the center should be the Employee Free Choice Act. This act would allow workers—not employers—to decide whether to have an election or use majority sign-up to establish a union. It would strengthen penalties for violating the rights of workers seeking to organize. It would establish a mandatory arbitration for the first agreement after a period of time to insure that both sides bargain in good faith.

Lots of folks have lots of concerns about unions. But the reality is that they are the only effective instrument we've found to

insure the creation of a broad middle class. We don't do much redistribution of income by taxation. We don't have much of a public social contract. We built America's middle class through strong unions that insured that workers got a decent share of the profits and productivity they helped to generate.

And that's why the Employee Free Choice Act can't wait. We can't go back to the old economy of Gilded Age inequality. We need to make the key changes in the course of the recovery to set the new economy on a new path. Strong unions aren't the whole answer, but they are a central part of any answer.

The corporate lobby—led by the Chamber of Commerce—has promised to fight to the end to stop Employee Free Choice, including \$200 million or more in attack ads and the like. Unions are mobilizing to reach their own members for what promises to be a central fight this year.

But this isn't just a union fight. All of us have a stake in strong unions creating the conditions for broadly shared prosperity. This will be a brutal fight, but it is one worth winning.

*Reprinted from the Chicago Sun Times, March 10, 2009.*



### Lanigan Named Good Scout

At the Greater New York Councils, Boy Scouts of America 2008 Labor Luncheon on December 12, International Vice President and Local 153 Secretary-Treasurer Richard Lanigan received the "Good Scout" Award.

Pictured are Lanigan and OPEIU International President Michael Goodwin with members of the Boy Scouts.

# Work and Health

## If You Are Given a Diagnosis of Cancer...

**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**

Receiving a diagnosis of cancer can be devastating. One does not know how to react, what to do or where to go, and especially what questions to ask. Although cancer management is becoming more standardized, many decisions for an individual patient remain complicated, especially if one does not have any experience with the condition. Patients are faced with the sophisticated decisions regarding treatment for their condition, decisions that they do not necessarily have enough information to make.

Since there is not necessarily a best "option" for any individual patient for treatment of cancer, a "correct" decision for any given situation is best made when the patient is informed about the latest scientific knowledge and the benefits and risks of each of the treatment choices. In spite of the importance of this, physicians are not

necessarily good judges of patient values and comprehension, and patients often do have inadequate appreciation of the facts, unrealistic expectations, and conflicts regarding the choices for therapy that are offered. This may well interfere with the final decision regarding treatment.

Effective approaches to support you, the patient, involve training physicians to share decision-making, something not all physicians are capable of achieving. You should look for one that can do this sharing so the burden is not all the physician's, but more importantly, not all on your shoulders; you should ask what are the appropriate questions that give you the information you need; printed material in non-medical language will bring clarity to the real choices; and having nurses and allied health professionals as interpreters and advisors will be of immense help.

Based on many cancer patient studies, we now know that the above mentioned aids will help to make what is often a difficult, confusing decision easier. The opportunity to have as clear an understanding and knowledge of your condition and to have access to your physician's knowledge, written information, and nurse and paraprofessional assistance in appreciating your condition and treatment options, IS YOUR RIGHT!!! Take advantage of it. It will make your decisions less complex, and your life much less complicated.

Besides, if you use these suggestions for any condition you may have, your decisions and the results that follow, may well be improved.

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



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Call the Save My Home Hotline at:

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# WASHINGTON WINDOW

## Abraham Lincoln and Workers

**F**ebruary 12 marked the bicentennial of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, whom historians generally rank — with George Washington and FDR — as one of the three greatest U.S. presidents.

As we paused to mark this anniversary, several key points struck us about Lincoln, from a worker's point of view:

- In Lincoln's era, the U.S. was a developing industrial country. Indeed, the Civil War he presided over and brought to a successful conclusion gave a tremendous boost to U.S. mass manufacturing and set the country on the road to becoming the world's leading industrial power. But that also brought the ills of modern industry to workers — dehumanization, monopoly, aggregations of great wealth, inequality, sweatshops, slums, poverty and merciless exploitation of human beings by the moneyed class.

- Lincoln may have been the first president elected from the party of the exploiters, but he himself was far from that. Not only was he dead set against slavery — views far ahead of those of most of the nation — but also against other forms of serfdom. Remember that

the 13th amendment to the Constitution, which he pushed through Congress before his murder in 1865, bans “slavery or involuntary servitude.”

We can think of many corporations — start with Wal-Mart and go from there — who violate that “involuntary servitude” clause, and who are now big givers to the GOP and violent foes of workers. Abraham Lincoln would utterly repudiate them.

- Lincoln himself was, for much of his life, an ordinary worker — a rail-splitter in Indiana and Illinois, a postmaster in New Salem, Ill., a cargo flatboat oarsman on trips down river in New Orleans. True, he later became a well-off lawyer, representing corporations as well as individuals, in Springfield. But, to use the current vernacular, Lincoln “never forgot his roots.” How do we know? He said so. Examples below:

“It has so happened in all ages of the world, that some have labored and others have, without labor, enjoyed a large proportion of the fruits. This is wrong, and should not continue.”

“Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital; that, in fact, capital is the fruit of labor, and could never have exist-

ed if labor had not first existed, that labor can exist without capital, but that capital could never have existed without labor. Hence...labor is the superior — greatly the superior — of capital.”

“I see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me and causes me to tremble for the safety of my country; corporations have been enthroned, an era of corruption in high places will follow, and the Money Power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people, until the wealth is aggregated in a few hands, and the Republic is destroyed. I feel at this moment more anxiety for the safety of my country than ever before, even in the midst of war.”

The date of Lincoln's first quote is unknown, but it was recently reprinted in *Smithsonian* magazine. The second is from his first message to Congress, in December 1861. The third is from Lincoln's letter, date unknown, to William Elkin.

For us as workers, Lincoln's quotes still ring true this very day.

The Great Emancipator believed in emancipating all workers. We do, too.



**Pictured at the Professional Helicopter Pilots' Association (PHPA) Council meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana are left to right (back row) Jim Whately, Steve Rush, Jeff Rusich, Ron Arsenault, Ken Bruner, Pete Catalano, Jason Harlow, Al Morden, Paul Bohelski, Paul Huertas, Dan McDade, Tony Boehm, Steve Ragin, Mel Saylor, (front row) Kevin A. Kistler, Erica Green, Jeff Stackpole, Butch Grafton, Sacha Whitehead, Michael Goodwin, Jeff Smith and Sharon Diaz.**

## Apply Now for OPEIU Scholarships!

**I**t's time again for all members, associate members and their dependents to apply for OPEIU scholarships! Applications are now available for the John Kelly Labor Studies Scholarship Fund, the Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship Fund and the Romeo Corbeil/Gilles Beaugard Summer Camp. The application deadline is near, so don't delay!

Applications can be obtained by visiting OPEIU's website, [www.opeiu.org](http://www.opeiu.org), or by returning this coupon to: Nancy Wohlforth, Secretary-Treasurer, OPEIU

Scholarship Applications,  
1660 L Street, NW, Suite  
801, Washington, DC  
20036, or **via**  
**fax to (202)**  
**347-0649.**

For more information  
about the scholarships,  
please visit our  
website at  
[www.opeiu.org](http://www.opeiu.org).



Name of Member \_\_\_\_\_ Local Union No. \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me the following applications:

- John Kelly Labor Studies Scholarship Fund
- Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship Fund
- Romeo Corbeil/Gilles Beaugard Summer Camp

## Wohlforth Plans Summer Camp 2009



OPEIU Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Wohlforth and Paul Rainsberger discuss plans for the 2009 Romeo Corbeil/Gilles Beaugard Summer Camp.

Rainsberger is the Director of Labor Studies at the University of Missouri. Thanks to his support, the Romeo Corbeil/Gilles Beaugard Summer Camp is permanently housed at the Missouri University Forest School of Natural Resources on Lake Wappapelo.

Children of members are encouraged to apply for the 2009 camp, which will take place the last week of July. Applications are now available at [www.opeiu.org](http://www.opeiu.org).



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## Area Educational Conferences Announced

The International Union has announced the 2009 schedule of Area Educational Conferences. Local Unions participating in a conference will receive a \$1,000 subsidy to offset the cost of hotel and transportation. The conferences provide up-to-date information that will help attendees deliver the best possible representation of members.

All Local Unions are urged to send delegates to one of these important conferences.

Notices will be sent to each Local Union. For more information contact Victoria Tirado-Roman at 212-675-3210.

**West/Northwest**  
**May 15-17, 2009**  
**Universal City, CA**

**North Central/Erie & Northeast**  
**May 28-31, 2009**  
**Washington, DC**

**Southeast/Southwest**  
**June 11-14, 2009**  
**Nashville, TN**

**Employee Free Choice Act**  
**Introduced in Congress on**  
**March 10, 2009 as**  
**H.R. 1409 and S. 560!**

## 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](http://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.

