Locals like 38 from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma traveled long distances to be heard—page 2.

Members, like Maymawatie Jamnapersaud from New York, speak out about why they came to Solidarity Day II—pages 6 & 7.

Labor leaders OPEIU President John Kelly and AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland explain the importance of Solidarity Day—page 8.
Members and local unions well-represented

The more than 2,000 OPEIU members traveled across the United States from as far as California and Washington State. They came by car, train, bus and airplane, representing nearly 50 local unions. Just a few of them are pictured here, but they all deserve credit for standing up for the rights of working people and families in America.

Local 2 from Washington, D.C.

Local 12 from Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota

Local 339 from Akron, Ohio

Local 471 from Brownsville, Pennsylvania

Local 106 from Groton, Connecticut

Local 502 from Oberlin, Ohio

Local 119 from Tennessee Valley Authority

Local 119 from Knoxville.
Solid and strong—
United for justice

There are many images that stand out in our minds from Solidarity Day 1991:

- A multi-colored ocean of union t-shirts filling and overflowing the boulevard from the Mall to Capitol Hill.
- A father carrying his young daughter atop his shoulders, while his son of 10 proudly carried the union sign demanding health care reform.
- A black trade unionist and her white union sister hugging and smiling for the cameras.
- A vast chorus of voices rising to sing the National Anthem with actress Jean Stapleton, and swelling again to sing “Solidarity Forever” led by country-western singer Willie Nelson.
- Fire trucks bringing welcoming relief from the heat as they sprayed the eager marchers with fire hoses.

Everyone has their memories and images from Solidarity Day II when an estimated 325,000 trade unionists from across the United States marched in the nation’s capitol. But a common thread in all is the feeling of solidarity and strength.

Nearly 100 labor unions, 184 affiliated organizations, and trade unionists from more than 30 countries joined together to protest the U.S. Government’s unfeeling treatment of the nation’s workers, families and the down-and-out and to celebrate the unity of the American labor movement.

The hordes called upon Congress and the President (both absent during a Congressional recess) to enact legislation providing for national health care for all, legislation prohibiting the permanent replacement of strikers, improved education programs, extended unemployment benefits, a civil rights bill, housing for the homeless, jobs for the unemployed.

OPEIU marchers
More than 2,000 OPEIU members from nearly 50 local unions spread across the U.S. traveled to Washington by bus, car, plane and train to join the celebration. From infants to 80-year old retirees, we were fully represented as families, workers, pensioners, trade unionists and voters.

OPEIU marchers were from every race and national origin—a microcosm of society at-large. There were men and women, old and young, handicapped, active and retired workers, workers from the public and the private sectors. They came from every state and work in insurance companies, shipping, banks and financial institutions, colleges and universities, hospitals and nursing homes, state and city governments, manufacturing, public utilities, transportation, every
Sector of the workforce. And, there were home health care workers, engineers, secretaries, electricians, nurses, computer programmers, food service workers, lawyers, lab technicians, janitors, supervisors. Although the temperatures soared to 97 degrees with high humidity, OPEIU marchers were welcomed to the Mall by Washington and New York staff at the OPEIU hospitality tent. There they found needed respite from the sweltering heat.

Singers like Pete Seeger entertained the marchers with songs of protest and solidarity.

From the sweltering heat.

OPEIU tent and staff welcomed marchers to the capital staging area—providing lunch and cold soft drinks throughout the day.

The OPEIU tent and staff welcomed marchers to the capital staging area—providing lunch and cold soft drinks throughout the day.
I'm here because I believe in Solidarity. All unions need to work together, and I'm so happy to see it. We have the same, powerful enemy. And, we need to organize.
John Peterson
Local 39, Madison, WI

I'm here because I believe in workers' and labor's rights, which they're trying to take away. We have to stand up and be counted.
Brenda Bremer
Local 277, Ft. Worth, TX

It's important to protect people's right to withhold their labor and not lose their jobs. And, most strikes today are over health benefits, which is another reason we're here today—to obtain a decent health delivery system for all.
Vivian Grubbs
Local 1794, Cleveland, OH

We need to join in solidarity with all the working people of America to protect our rights and those of our families.
Debra Graumann
Local 381, Oklahoma City, OK

Striker replacement legislation that prevents the permanent hiring of striker-breakers and a decent health care system for all are the key issues needing to be passed by Congress.
Rick Klein
Local 2, Washington, DC

This is important because unions are the basic foundation of this country. Without unions many of us would not be as far as we are up the economic ladder.
Leroy Aplin
Local 153, New York, NY
marching for justice

We get no help from Washington, DC. It's time to unite to give them our message: we need health care reform and worker protections.

Elizabeth Alonzo
Local 29, Oakland, CA

I came to help make our point: we want health care reform, stronger union protections, a civil rights act, and we want them now.

Ann Jackson
Local 268, Knoxville, TN

I traveled 23 1/2 hours to get here and be a part of all this because we have to show our legislators and the country that we trade unionists stand together on these important issues.

Jody Monahan
Local 53, Omaha, NE

I'm here because I love OPEIU and the labor movement which have done so much for me. I support them because they've always supported me.

Valerie Manlove
Local 1, Indianapolis, IN

We're marching for the health of America and to obtain for all of America's workers the right to strike without fear of permanent replacement.

Julie Weir
Local 592, Oberlin, OH

We need to show the world one united front of all unions working together. It's wonderful to see everyone here.

Adele White Eusey
Local 32, Newark, NJ
Protect the right to strike
by John Kelly, International President

I was never more proud of our OPEIU members than I was on August 31, 1991—Solidarity Day II. I looked out at the sea of faces and couldn’t help but feel the sense of solidarity and strength and to be proud of our union and the labor movement—both of whom have worked throughout the years to unite working people, to raise the standard of living for them and their families, and to stand up for the helpless and hopeless that no one else will support. But that movement is in jeopardy. And, that’s why we gathered in Washington for a day of celebration and protest.

It is essential that we seek passage of legislation to ban the permanent replacement of strikers, or we will see our bargaining power drastically eroded. We have thus far been successful in the House of Representatives where we won passage of H.R. 5, the Workplace Fairness bill by a 65-vote edge. The 247-182 vote provided a comfortable margin for passage of the legislation, which would ban the use of permanent replacement workers during a lawful economic strike. (You can contact our Research Department to see how your Representative voted.)

One of the major reasons for the overwhelming win in the House was the outpouring of vocal support for the legislation from trade unionists and their families in the Representatives’ home districts. Between mailgrams, post cards and letter writing campaigns from unions, close to one million messages urging the passage of the legislation flooded Capitol Hill.

And, we are pleased that the majority of House members recognize that the loophole allowing employers to “permanently replace” striking workers is contrary to the spirit and intent of the nation’s labor laws. It is ironical that the law guarantees workers the right to strike but at the same time allows employers to permanently replace those workers the minute the strike begins. What sense does that make? This is a bill about fairness in the workplace, and this is a fairness which the majority of American people assume is already in existence. Most Americans assume that workers already have the right to strike. Clearly reality is something else.

This bill, however, will correct that.

The Senate fight
The road to Senate passage of S. 55—the companion bill to H.R. 5—will be much rougher than the House path to victory. It is expected that the bill’s backers will need to round up 60 votes for the cloture vote to break a predicted filibuster.

We need another intensive effort to sway Senators as the vote nears. We marched on Solidarity Day II to give them that message. Now we need you to follow up with phone calls, mailgrams, post cards and letters urging your Senators to vote for passage of S. 55.

Act now. If you do not know your Senators and/or need their addresses or phone numbers call our office. Call us collect at (202) 675-9210.

Without the protected right to strike, we will have little strength at the bargaining table to improve the lives of our families, to represent our members, to obtain justice and dignity on the job.

Solidarity Day Remarks of AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland

Brothers and sisters—this gathering of labor and its allies forms the heart and conscience of America. We call this solidarity—and we know that solidarity works!

What brings us to this place? We are here because we care about this country and the values for which it stands.

We’re here to remind our elected representatives that they were put there to serve, not the faceless marketplace, but the aspirations of real people.

We’re here to raise our voice, as one, against the power of special interests organized around the primacy of greed at the expense of the people who make this country work.

We’re here to insist that democratic government—the White House, the Congress and the Courts—must assure fair play for all—not just for those with the most money, the most luck, or the strongest bootstraps.

We’re here to demand action, now, on health care reform. If government cannot break the barriers to access to medical services for all—that most basic of human needs—then what good can it do?

We’re here to demand action by the Senate of the United States on the striker replacement bill. If our government cannot be trusted to keep its promise to protect our fundamental right to strike in defense of our families—then how can it be trusted at all?

And if it cannot act firmly and boldly to advance that bedrock guarantee of human liberty, freedom of association at home and abroad, then for what good purpose does it exist?

Today we are joined by our brother and sister trade unionists from all over the world in celebration of the vital role that freedom of association must play in human life.

Everywhere you look—in Eastern and Central Europe, in Asia, in South Africa, and now even in the republics of the Soviet Union—working people like you are rising to their feet, taking to the streets and demanding their fundamental right to breathe free and to live in dignity. China next! Cuba next!

Workers everywhere have shown the world that justice and human liberty do not come from on high, but from the ground, where their roots must flourish and grow.

Their struggle enriches us all. And it tells us all that if we go from this place and work together and fight together to advance our common goals, today and tomorrow, we cannot fail.

We shall prevail.

Solidarity forever!