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# CWA news

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## Unions & Collective Bargaining: A Positive Force for The Greater Good

**ORGANIZED LABOR:  
The Folks Who Brought You  
THE WEEKEND**

*...and retirement security*

*...and family & medical leave*

*...and Medicare*

*...and a living wage*

*...and a voice at work*

*...and job safety*

UNION-1

## WORKING Together

# Restoring the Middle Class Means Restoring Bargaining Rights



Larry Cohen  
CWA President

In democracies around the world — including many developing economies — there is a general understanding that collective bargaining is a public good. Labor laws and policies reflect that fact by protecting workers' organizing rights and promoting collective bargaining.

The role of collective bargaining and unions in promoting social progress once was recognized in the United States, too, as embodied in the 1935 National Labor Relations Act. But the spirit as well as the provisions of our labor laws have all but been destroyed by the steady assault of corporations and union-hating politicians. The articles in this special theme issue describe what that has meant to our nation.

The chart on the next page makes a clear point. Countries with a high percentage of workers who have bargaining rights are far ahead of the United States in providing universal health coverage, strong retirement security, paid family and sick leave and other protections that benefit every citizen.

And it isn't just high-income countries that surpass the United States in ensuring decent working and living conditions. Workers in Portugal, Ireland and Korea, for example, receive pensions amounting to a higher portion of pre-retirement earnings than U.S. workers. Even formerly repressive regimes such as South Africa and Brazil have higher percentages of workers with bargaining rights than our country today.

By contrast, the dismal position of the United States in these areas can be attributed to the fact that only 12 million of our workers today have collective bargaining agreements.

Another chart, on page 5, vividly shows the trend in our

country. It is a bell curve representing the surge of traditional pension coverage during the period of highest union representation in the United States — nearly 35 percent in the mid-1950s — with coverage plummeting as the percentage of workers with bargaining rights has dropped sharply.

At the bargaining table, organized workers set a standard that elevated all workplaces and created the American middle-class during the post-war period. Besides the growth of pension plans, wage levels grew dramatically, employer-based health care brought coverage to millions of families, jobs were relatively secure.

Today we all recognize the term "middle-class squeeze." Real income has stagnated for years even as we work longer hours. Forty-seven million Americans have no health coverage at all. Outsourcing is stealing good jobs and forcing people to accept lower paying positions. College opportunity is slipping away for many young people. Companies are eliminating traditional pensions.

Can there be any doubt that this is directly linked to the weakening of our unions and our collective bargaining rights?

Beyond wage and benefit standards, workers through their organized power have contributed mightily to the greater good in the political arena, often through alliances with other groups and movements.

As articles in this issue describe, the grassroots energy and ferment of the early union movement paved the way for the 40-hour week and other protections of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

The labor movement was a central force in the American civil rights movement. Such fundamental programs as Medicare, the Minimum Wage, the Family and Medical Leave Act, and the Occupational Safety and Health Act

wouldn't exist without the clout of unions and rank-and-file activists.

Restoring the American middle class means restoring the bargaining power of American workers. Just as we had a substantial movement of worker activists who won positive change in the 1930s and '40s, we need to build a new movement — a stewards army — to reestablish our bargaining power.

And it is essential that we pass the Employee Free Choice Act to mitigate the tactics employers use to intimidate and frustrate workers in gaining representation and winning first contracts (see page 11).

I'm hopeful that as you read this, the Act will have already been passed by the U.S. House of Representatives. That is really just the beginning of the fight, because this administration has pledged to its corporate friends that it will veto the measure.

**Just as we had a substantial movement of worker activists who won positive change in the 1930s and '40s, we need to build a new movement — a stewards army — to reestablish our bargaining power.**

But House passage will demonstrate that the last election gave us the beginning of a new era in Washington — that the winds are finally turning against the forces of corporate greed and excess and in favor of working families. It will give us the confidence and energy to complete the job of electing leaders in 2008 who will stand up for workers' organizing and bargaining rights.

We're back — we're fighting back! But as always, this will only move forward with your support and leadership.

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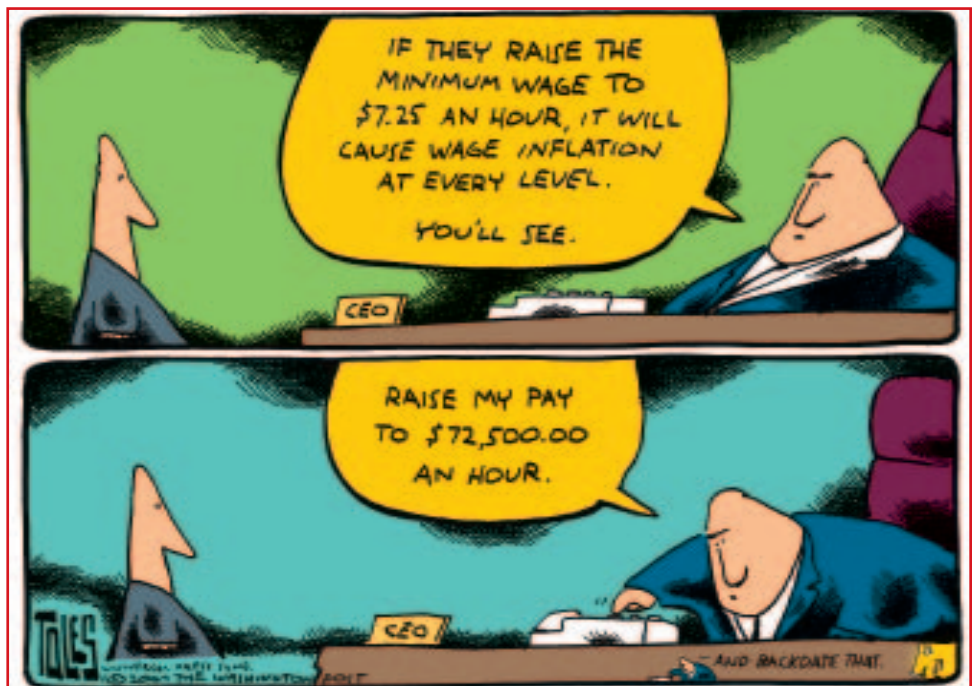
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# Collective Bargaining: A Positive Force **FOR THE GREATER GOOD**

This month, CWA News focuses on how the power of collective bargaining and worker organization contribute to the general well-being of all citizens — in the United States and around the world.

**Two points are striking from the articles in this special report:**

1) In the United States, many of our most important social gains — from the 40-hour week to the passage of Medicare — came about when worker representation and union influence was much greater than today. And now, as the percentage of workers with bargaining rights has declined from a high of 35 percent to 12 percent, every one of these progressive programs is under attack from business and anti-worker forces.

2) By contrast, other developed and even emerging nations have seen growth in bargaining rights to levels much higher than ours. And as the chart below demonstrates, the strength and influence of organized workers directly translates into strong social programs and policies — universal health care coverage, strong retirement security systems, extensive family leave programs, and more.

These other nations recognize that workers' rights and collective bargaining are a public good, not an impediment to productivity, as corporate America would have us believe. That's the message behind labor's campaign to strengthen workers' bargaining rights through passage of the Employee Free Choice Act.



**The American Labor Movement has consistently demonstrated its devotion to the public interest. It is, and has been, good for all America. Those who would destroy or further limit the rights of organized labor — those who cripple collective bargaining or prevent organization of the unorganized — do a disservice to the cause of democracy.**

— John F. Kennedy

## Workers' Rights Make the Difference Around the World

**B**y nearly every measure, countries with full collective bargaining rights rank high in key workplace and quality of life issues for working families, from health care and

retirement security to paid maternity leave and work hours. (See chart for details.)

Yet with these worker and family friendly policies in place, productivity in many countries — France,

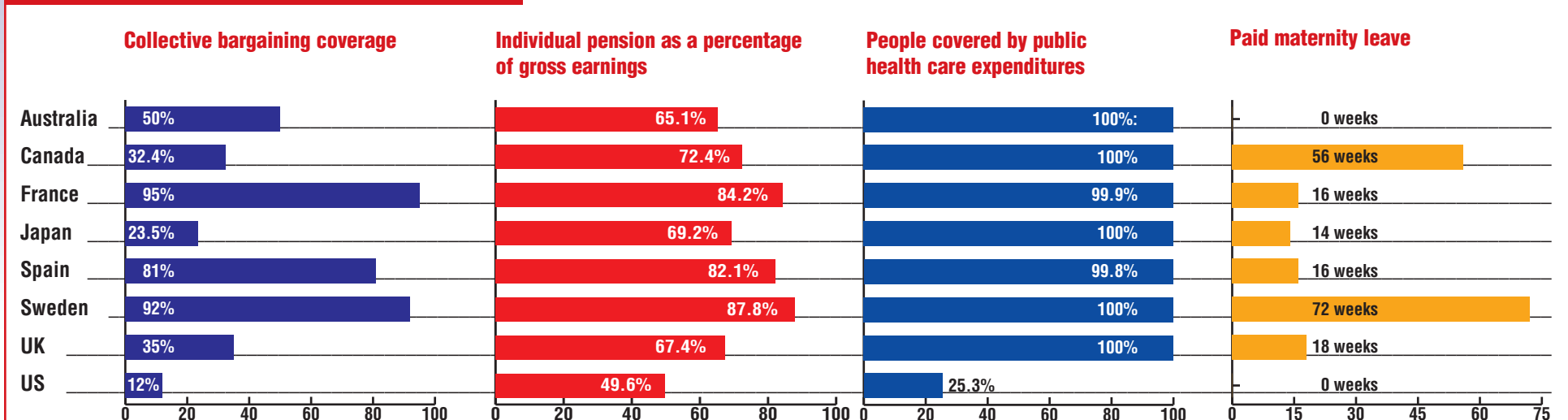
Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, to name a few — is higher than in the United States.

In the United States, collective bargaining coverage — the percentage of workers who are covered by

and can exercise their workplace rights — is about 8 percent for private sector workers and 12 percent overall, far lower than any other democracy in the world. This gap really makes a difference when it

comes to annual and sick leave, pensions, health care coverage and other policies that improve the quality of life of all of us.

### How Does the United States Stack Up?



# From Weekends to Retirement Security, Unions Make All Workers' Lives Better

**T**he bumper sticker says it all: "Unions. The Folks Who Brought You the Weekend."

American workers who belong to unions, those who don't and even those who view unions with nothing but contempt have the labor movement to thank for the 40-hour workweek.

Workers literally died fighting for the work hours Americans enjoy today. In one of a wave of strikes for the eight-hour day across the country in May 1886, seven demonstrators were killed in Milwaukee when the state militia opened fire. Protesters and police alike were killed in the infamous Haymarket Riot in Chicago.

It would be another 50 years of unrest before the eight-hour day became law. Marches and strikes included a citywide walk-out in Seattle, textile workers and telephone operators in New England, police in Boston, steelworkers in the Midwest and tens of thousands of other workers

**Organized labor as a whole has become stronger in membership, stronger in influence, and stronger in its capacity to serve the interests of the laboring man and woman and of society in general, than at any other time in our whole history.**

— Franklin Roosevelt



The 2004 fight to save overtime rights for millions of Americans was one of the many battles CWA and the labor movement have waged over the last half century on behalf of all workers, whether they are union members or not.

who risked their jobs and even their lives.

It became part of the Fair Labor Standards Act, championed by American unions and a president, Franklin Roosevelt, who genuinely believed that unions and workers' rights made the country stronger. Under Roosevelt, unions also saw the birth of the National Labor Relations Act and Social Security.

"Organized labor as a whole has become stronger in membership, stronger in influence, and stronger in its capacity to serve the interests of the laboring man and woman and of society in general, than at any other time in our whole history," Roosevelt told the 1940 Teamsters convention.

Twenty-five years later, under President Lyndon Johnson, unions pushed for passage of the Medicare bill, bringing health coverage to millions of elderly and disabled Americans.

Today, CWA and other unions are on the front lines of the fight to pre-

serve Social Security as the Bush administration, Republican leaders and Wall Street push to privatize at least part of the system — putting a secure retirement at risk for all but the wealthiest Americans. CWA is a leader in labor's campaign to educate union members and all Americans about the threat to Social Security and is mobilizing them to take action.

In the battle for universal health care, unions are also fighting to strengthen and expand Medicare. Labor is also championing ways to fix the badly mangled Medicare prescription drug law, specifically calling for the government to negotiate with drug companies for better prices as the Veteran's Administration has done successfully for years.

As for the hard-won laws protecting workers' rights, they are under assault as never before, with employers and business groups led by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce taking full advantage of the Bush administration's hostility toward workers. In addition to the push to privatize Social Security, big business wants to roll back the Fair Labor Standards Act, Family and Medical Leave (see sidebars) and overtime rights, among other attacks.

CWA helped lead one of the largest mobilizations in recent labor history to fight the White House scheme to kill overtime rights for



**If any man tells you he loves America, yet hates labor, he is a liar. If any man tells you he trusts America, yet fears labor, he is a fool.**

— Abraham Lincoln

millions of workers, a battle labor waged even though most union members wouldn't have been affected. The Labor Department made some changes to the overtime language in the Fair Labor Standards Act, but union resolve stopped some of the most damaging of the proposed changes.

"We have millions of members to protect from the whims of greedy employers and legislative maneuvers that put business interests far above the needs of working families," CWA President Larry Cohen said. "But we are proud that we can use our clout, our power in numbers, to speak out for the voiceless, for the workers who aren't represented. And we will never stop doing that."

## Labor Again Leads Fight to Raise Minimum Wage

**I**f you've got a union contract, you earn more — at least a little more, and sometimes a lot more — than minimum wage. Yet no group has worked harder than union members to raise the country's minimum wage and the standard of living for America's working poor.

As CWA Local 7037 President Robin Gould put it, "The bottom line is that it's the right thing to do and the ethical thing to do."

Gould's public worker local is helping to lead the charge in New Mexico to raise the state's minimum wage. And if anyone knows how to run a campaign like that it's Gould, her members and their

allies in the social activist community: Three years ago, they succeeded in passing a living wage law covering virtually all employers in Santa Fe. The wage is now \$9.50 an hour.

"We got involved because we're not only interested in our members, we're interested in all workers and all workers' issues," Gould said. "This was another way we could address some of the inequities in what is a very, very wealthy community."

The federal minimum wage has stood at \$5.15 an hour for a decade. Democrats in Congress are determined to raise it, but Republicans and a few Democrats are holding it up with demands that any raise be



tied to tax cuts for businesses. Nationally, union members continue to turn out for rallies and marches, lead e-mail campaigns, meet with lawmakers and otherwise lobby for a federal minimum wage hike. A pending bill would raise it to \$7.25

an hour.

Unions are also leading the way at the state level. From testifying before state legislatures to holding town hall meetings and doing many other mobilization activities, unions have succeeded in getting 29 states

CWA members have been active in campaigns for state and federal minimum wage hikes as well as efforts to set living wages in communities across the United States. At left, one of the many events activists staged in their successful campaign to pass a living wage in Santa Fe, N.M.

and Washington, D.C., to pass minimum wages that are higher than the federal wage.

Richard Troxell, who founded and runs the Universal Living Wage Campaign, said unions have played a pivotal role in wage battles for low-income workers and his group is preparing to ask them to get even more involved as the campaign grows.

"This is a wage level below what union members earn. It's not going to directly benefit them," Troxell said. "But I think, especially in this current administration, people are saying, 'This is just wrong.' And that voice is getting louder and louder."

# CWA Battles Employer Assault on Pensions

Organized labor was the driving force behind the tremendous growth of employer-sponsored pension plans from the 1940s to the 1990s, with the number of Americans covered by pensions rising as more workers gained bargaining rights. Yet, today, with union membership in the U.S. at 12 percent, its lowest level since the early 1930s, Americans' retirement security is in crisis (see chart).

In recent years, employers have been terminating traditional ("defined benefit") pension plans at an alarming rate. Since 1985, the number of such plans fell from 112,000 to just 28,000 today and the number of workers covered has dropped from 30 million to 16 million. (Three-quarters of workers with traditional pensions are union-represented.)

Often these days, it is not financially troubled companies that are dumping pensions, but some of the biggest of the Fortune 500. Last year Sears, Hewlett-Packard, Lockheed Martin and Motorola terminated their pension plans, as did telecom giant Verizon for its management and non-represented employees, who also lost retiree health coverage.

Replacing traditional pensions in favor of 401(k) plans where workers contribute, often substantially, to their retirement savings, fattens the corporate balance sheet by eliminating future benefit liabilities — a pleasing sight for investors.

The impact on workers can be devastating. When IBM switched its 140,000 employees to a scaled-back pension in 1999, it assured workers that the new pension would be "more flexible" and have a minimal monetary impact. "I'll never forget the phrase they used," recalled Jim Mangi, an IT specialist with 18 years at IBM. "Management said the impact would be 'cost neutral.'"

For Mangi, then 33, "cost neu-

tral" meant a 42 percent reduction in the value of his pension at retirement. For others, it meant a 50 percent reduction. Many discovered they would have to work an additional 10 years or more to make up for what IBM took away.

The move created a firestorm and IBM employees, many with 15 or more years' service, contacted CWA about organizing a union. They formed a nationwide organization, the Alliance@IBM/CWA Local 1701, and eventually succeeded in narrowing the scope and impact of IBM's pension switch. They also spurred

the beginning of a national dialogue on corporate pension practices and abuses that continues to this day.

For union workers, a favorite corporate scheme

has been use of the bankruptcy process to throw out their collective bargaining agreements in order to dump pension obligations. United Airlines did just that last year, handing its pension liabilities to the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation (PBGC), the government's pension agency. The impact meant a 50 percent reduction in retirement benefits for two thirds of AFA-CWA's 18,000 flight attendants at United.

*A favorite corporate scheme has been the use of the bankruptcy process to throw out collective bargaining agreements in order to dump pension obligations.*



CWA members and retirees from IUE-CWA, above, as well as airline workers, public employees and members of other sectors have been leading a national fight not only for their own pension security but that of millions of Americans whose traditional defined-benefit plans are being scrapped.

AFA-CWA sued to block the move. It also urged Congress to prevent the pension's takeover pending a thorough review. The workers took their message to the public, demonstrating at airports

throughout the country. Together, the actions put tremendous pressure on the airline which eventually agreed in negotiations to AFA-CWA's bargaining demand to establish a replacement defined-contribution

pension, or 401(k). The workers' old pension was taken over by the PBGC, but their new pension, coupled with benefits from their old pension, will allow them to recover a significant share of their losses.

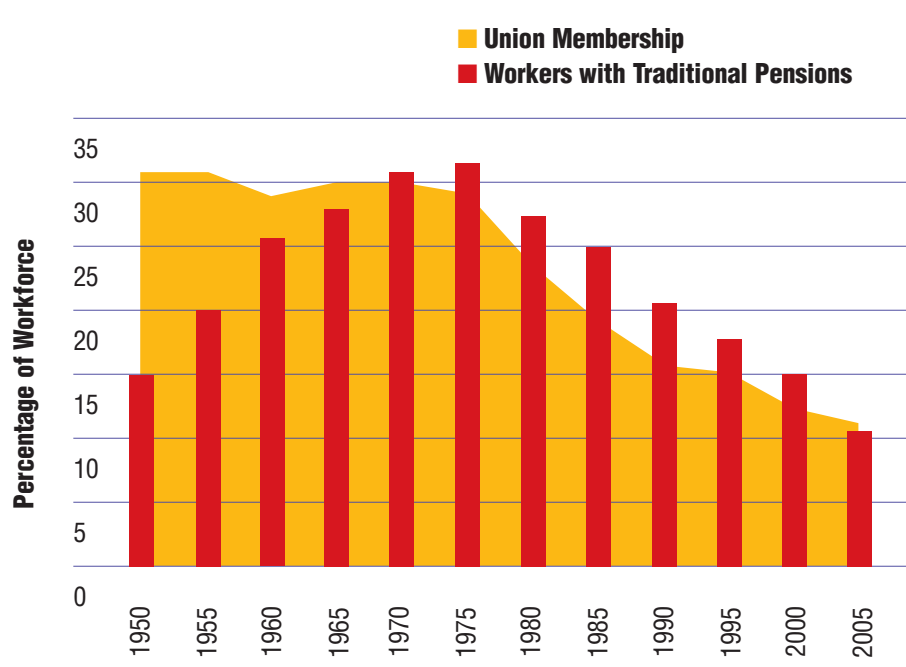
Pensions of public workers also are under attack. CWA is now fighting to preserve the pensions of 50,000 New Jersey state workers. State legislators, seeking to stem taxpayers' anger over rising property taxes, sought to blame the workers' benefits for the state's financial problems. Legislation was introduced to slash workers' pensions and effectively terminate pensions for all new state workers.

Months of lobbying and mobilizing by the workers — culminating in a massive rally by 15,000 CWA public workers at the Statehouse in December — persuaded lawmakers to withdraw the anti-pension measure.

Just as this issue went to press, the workers reached a tentative agreement with the state that preserves pensions for all current and future state workers.

## The Rise & Fall of the Traditional Pension

The growth in the percentage of workers covered by traditional "defined-benefit" pensions in the U.S. closely has tracked the rise and fall of Americans who have collective bargaining.



Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics and U.S. Census Bureau. Pensions are for private sector only.

# Putting Union Clout Behind Public Service

In Buffalo, N.Y., a man is alive because he could get to an emergency room. In Midland, Texas, a needy child is fed because of a social worker's patient attention. On the Mississippi Gulf Coast, hurricane victims receive emergency assistance because state workers help them fill out the necessary applications. All benefit from the services of publicly funded institutions, but more particularly from the dedication of CWA members.

## Walking the Walk

When last December a New York state commission recommended the closing or modification of nine hospitals to curb skyrocketing Medicaid costs — including three in the Buffalo area — CWA Local 1168, Nurses United, swung into action. The commission's recommendations became law when the state legislature failed to act upon them by Dec. 31. So the local planned a 320-mile walk from Buffalo to Albany, the state capital, hoping to publicize the plight of their patients and secure a meeting with Gov. Eliot Spitzer and key legislators.

Two Local 1168 members, Dawn Mele and Pat Sullivan, accompanied by local President John Klein, local executive board members and members of Locals 1122 and 1133, set out from DeGraff Memorial Hospital on Jan. 2. Buffalo's DeGraff, Millard Fillmore and St. Joseph's hospitals, employing about 4,000 Local 1168 members, treat hundreds of patients in their three emergency rooms — all slated for closing.

"Many indigent and elderly patients receive care in these ERs, and there's normally a four- to-five-hour wait," Klein said. "They're already diverting ambulances to other hospitals. In cases of heart attacks or other acute problems, an extra 10 minutes' drive could cost a patient his or her life."

The walkers averaged about 16 miles a day, stopping at other health care facilities, listening to the concerns of communities, and sometimes braving temperatures below zero.

A few days into the walk, Mele



Thirty-two Health and Human Services members of Local 6186 on Jan. 24 gathered in Austin to visit Texas legislators. The "mini lobby day" was one of a series in which members who work in particular state agencies bring their issues to the capital, leading up to the local's main lobby day on April 18.

joked about a blister, calling it "my friend — it's bandaged pretty good, so we're just moving along. We're lucky today; it's 35 degrees and we've got some sun."

But with warm jackets and orange scarves emblazoned with a big "CWA," she and Sullivan were prepared for the bitter cold that would come. "I think it's for a great cause. It's for the community, so they'll have a say in this, and it's for the workers. We'll be out in the cold instead of our patients," Mele said.

Mele, an anatomic pathology assistant at Fillmore, and Sullivan, who works in patient reception in DeGraff's radiology department, did the entire walk. Other union members participated in stretches close to home. And CWA President Larry Cohen and District 1 Vice President Chris Shelton walked the final day, Jan. 26, as the nurses headed into Albany.

Spitzer and legislators met with the nurses, heard their concerns and pledged to maintain a continuing dialog. For the first time, said Shelton, he heard the word "flexibility" as to how the commission's report might be implemented.

The local is continuing its community awareness and lobbying activities to try to save as many as 4,000 health care jobs in the Buffalo area.

## Saving Social Services

When the Texas Legislature in 2003 passed a bill authorizing the conversion of the state's human services eligibility system to a privatized call center system, the Texas State Employees Union-CWA mounted a campaign that saved 99 local human services offices, 2,900 state employee jobs and the face-to-face contact that is so important to

clients in need of assistance.

"Hundreds of our activists led the local forward into an all-out fight to put an end to the deal," said TSEU-CWA Local 6186 Vice President Mike Gross.

The state awarded an \$899 million contract to Accenture, a Bermuda-based consulting firm, to establish up to four call centers around the state to process human services applications. Accenture set up call centers in Midland, San Antonio and Austin and planned to shut down other offices around the state, causing layoffs of CWA-represented state workers.

More than 100,000 children's Medicaid and health insurance



Pat Sullivan, right, and Dawn Mele call for community support for Local 1168's walk across the state to block hospital closings in Western New York. With them are local President John Klein, front center, executive board members and supporters from other locals.

enrollments and food stamp applications became backed up at the Midland and Austin call centers.

Groups of TSEU-CWA members lobbied county leaders, state legislators and members of Congress, building bipartisan opposition to the plan. The local prevailed on 60 state legislators to press the state's Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to halt the call center experiment and return more than 12,000 backlogged cases to state employees.

In December, HHSC announced its contract with Accenture would be reduced to \$566 million — for the scanning of documents and other data processing functions only.

TSEU-CWA activists continue to visit legislators, asking for full cancellation of the Accenture contract and the hiring of additional workers to strengthen the agency.

## Caring After Katrina

Two years ago when Hurricane Katrina struck the state's Gulf Coast, social workers represented by the Mississippi Alliance of State Employees, CWA Local 3570 — often cut off from their own families that had sustained losses — were dispatched to storm-ravaged Biloxi, Ocean Springs and Gulfport, where they took applications for assistance from hundreds who had lost their homes and possessions.

"For the first time our governor had an opportunity to see our state employees in action," said Local 3570 President Brenda Scott. "We had members who went down and stayed in tents and trailers just to be able to provide those services. Now, we're fighting to get a disaster relief package in place that's friendly to communities and to our members, particularly those who are in the eye of the storm."

# Goals, Values Bond Labor, Civ

The labor movement has a long history of fighting for civil rights for all Americans and human rights worldwide. Despite major victories over the last 50 years, there is still hard work to do. Unions continue to be at the forefront of the fight for fairness on issues that include immigration, fair trade and workplace equality. NAACP Chairman Julian Bond discussed the alliance between labor and civil rights activists, past and present, in a speech to the 2005 AFL-CIO convention. What follows are excerpts.

By Julian Bond, NAACP Chairman

I know the mutual benefits that grew from the historic alliance between organized labor and the movement for civil rights — benefits we all must work to strengthen and extend today.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, most labor unions excluded blacks. Things began to change when A. Philip Randolph organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in the 1920s. Blacks scored a major breakthrough in the struggle for admis-

sion to the ranks of organized labor in 1930 when the AFL recognized the Brotherhood.

In 1924, the NAACP helped create the Interracial Labor Commission. Its goal was to bring more blacks into the labor movement. It worked. Thousands of black workers joined the ranks of the organized rank-and-file in the ensuing years as widespread dis-



Julian Bond



crimination began to fall, and they quickly became some of labor's most disciplined and dedicated foot soldiers, infusing the movement with renewed energy and vigor.

In many organizing campaigns in the 1930s and 1940s, especially in the South, black workers were the first to join, were the most steadfast and the most militant.

# Activism Brings Safer Workplaces, Safer Communities

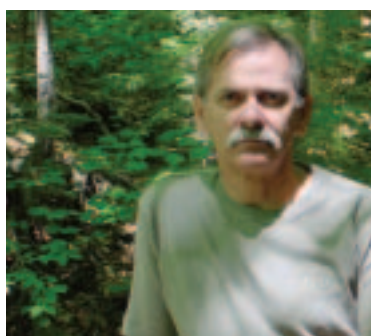
**W**ithout the labor movement, there would be virtually no safety and health protections in American workplaces — and fewer environmental protections against toxic chemicals and other hazards throughout our homes and communities as well.

Plagued by thousands of deaths and workplace injuries, AFL-CIO unions including CWA mounted an intense lobbying and education campaign in the 1960s leading to passage of landmark legislation to protect workers. The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 created the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration to establish and enforce workplace health and safety standards.

Countless lives have been saved because of OSHA and safety laws specific to industries although, "We fight a constant battle for adequate funding and enforcement against big business lobbyists and their political allies," noted CWA Health and Safety Director Dave LeGrande.

Beyond the Washington arena, union safety and health activists are active year-round in working not only to improve conditions at CWA job sites but throughout their communities as well.

For example, Steve Gauthier, for the past 10 years Local 81201's



*Local 81201 safety and health activist Steve Gauthier advocates for safer alternatives to toxic chemicals used at home and in the workplace.*

safety and health representative at the General Electric Gear Plant Division in Lynn, Mass., has successfully worked with management to reduce the number of recordable workplace injuries or illnesses from 23 to 2.7 per year.

As a member of the plant's joint safety and health committee, he has identified and helped eliminate conditions such as exposure to toxic fumes given off by solvents and known to cause death by asphyxiation, exposure to asbestos which can cause serious lung disease, and amputations due to accidents with heavy equipment.

He also is active on the labor advisory committee of the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow (AHT), advocating for the use of safer chemicals that eventually find their

way into people's homes.

Through a five-year lobbying campaign, AHT succeeded in 2006 in winning a new state law requiring the mandatory industrial phase-out of mercury. A dangerous neurotoxin, mercury has been linked to learning disabilities and developmental delays in children, as well as damage to the heart, nervous system and kidneys in adults.

The Mercury Products Bill, signed into law by Gov. Mitt Romney in July 2006, calls for mercury-added products to be replaced with safer alternatives whenever feasible, prohibits the disposal of mercury-containing waste products as solid waste, and promotes and ensures the proper collection, transportation, recycling and disposal of all mercury-containing products.

Now Gauthier and the coalition are working to enact two more bills to require the use of safer alternatives to chemicals used in cleaning products and to reduce the incidence of asthma and other health threats from the emissions of toxic chemicals used in schools, health care facilities, public buildings and public housing.

## Curing 'Sick Buildings'

In New Jersey, CWA locals including 1034 and 1040 joined with the N.J. Education Association and other public employees as early as 1983 to lobby for a statewide Indoor Air Quality Standard. And they have continued to work closely with the New Jersey Work Environment Council — a coalition of 70 labor, community and environmental organizations working for safe, secure jobs and a healthy, sustainable environment.

The present standard, first implemented in 1996 and enforced by the state health department, establishes regulations for controlling microbial and other air contaminants in public buildings, and requires record-keeping and investigation of employee complaints, inspections and enforcement.

Eileen Senn, a retired health department employee and former Local 1034 executive board member, worked on the standard from the beginning. An industrial hygienist, she continues as a consultant to WEC. Local 1034 Staff Representative

Mark Watson recently chaired a series of meetings between state employers and employees to formulate recommendations for updating the standard this year.

Based on those recommendations and additional research, WEC testified at a state hearing Jan. 5, asking that employers improve compliance and staff training, that water intrusion be cleaned up within 48 hours of occurrence and aired out before reoccupancy of a building, and that the toxicity of construction materials be checked before they are selected. The recommendations, expected to be put in place this June, also define "sick building syndrome" and establish it as a basis for investigation, and they expand coverage of the act to school buildings.

Said Senn, "The changes will improve indoor air quality in places of public employment frequented by state residents as well as some 1.4 million students."



**The labor movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress. Out of its bold struggles, economic and social reform gave birth to unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, government relief for the destitute and, above all, new wage levels that meant not mere survival but a tolerable life.**

— Martin Luther King Jr.

## Civil Rights Movements



Ernest C. Withers

Shortly before his murder in Memphis, Tenn., in 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. addresses striking sanitation workers, strengthening ties between the labor and civil rights communities. Below, CWA and other union members take a stand for immigrant workers' rights at a 2004 rally in Washington D.C.

Given our common interests, minority Americans and organized labor are both better off when we cooperate. Most of us are working people. Our interests and your interests are the same.

In 1961, when Martin Luther King Jr. addressed the AFL-CIO's Fourth Constitutional Convention, he spoke of the "unity of purpose" between the labor movement and the movement for civil rights. He said:

*"Our needs are identical with labor's needs: decent wages, fair working conditions, livable housing, old age security, health and welfare measures, conditions in which families can grow, have education for their children and respect in the community.... The duality of interests of labor and Negroes makes any crisis which lacerates you a crisis from which we bleed. As we stand on the threshold of the second half of the twentieth century, a crisis confronts us both."*

Now, as we stand on the threshold of the 21st century, a crisis confronts us once again.

It is a crisis for the freedom movement and a crisis for the movement of working women and men. Despite impressive increases in the numbers of black people

holding public office, despite our ability now to sit and eat and ride and vote and attend school in places that used to bar black faces, in some important ways non-white Americans face restrictions more difficult to attack than in the years that went before.

In recent years, in a stealthy, devious campaign, the enemies of justice and fair play have whittled away at the components of the progressive coalition. They've promoted deeply flawed economic and foreign policies. They've passed tax cuts that were not only unfair but unaffordable.

They're attacking Social Security. They want private charity to replace government's helping hand. They've outsourced thousands and thousands of jobs. They've gone after labor unions, making it harder for workers to organize.

We are today the most economically stratified of all industrial nations, the gap between rich and poor larger than in Britain, Italy, Germany, Canada, France, Finland—larger here and growing faster here than anywhere else.

More than 40 years ago, a coalition of progressive forces brought justice to the segregated South. That coalition can shape public policy once again.

Minority Americans have better lives because of labor's struggles. Labor supported the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Fair Housing Act of 1968, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988 and the Civil Rights Act of 1991.

The interests of minorities and labor are inevitably bound together; as Martin Luther King said, "When you are cut, we bleed."



## Flying the Safer, Healthier Skies

Americans can thank union flight attendants for making flying healthier, safer, and more secure. For decades, members of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA have worked to make their workplace — the cabin environment that we only temporarily inhabit — hazard free. No one benefits more from their efforts than U.S. airline passengers, who make a mind-boggling 656 million boardings each year.

Besides concerns over terrorism, turbulence and occasional accidents, the cabin environment itself on planes is less benign than most people imagine. AFA-CWA and its members are more vigilant about passengers' health and safety than either the airlines or the government, which usually have to be dragged kicking and screaming into addressing workplace hazards in the passenger cabin.

The cabin environment presents numerous health and safety risks — for example, foul cabin air. On most planes, cabin air



AFA-CWA has opposed pesticide spraying on aircraft because of its harmful effects on passengers. Residual toxins from pesticide left on airline seats are easily ingested by infants and toddlers.

passes through the aircraft's engines. Flight attendants call it "engine bleed" air, and it sometimes becomes contaminated with fumes from heated engine oil. Because oil-contaminated air can cause respiratory ailments, muscle aches and neurological problems, flight attendants have lobbied the government and industry to address the issue. Every year, more than 100 members of AFA-CWA descend on Congress, speaking to members of the House and Senate on this and other cabin safety issues. The industry is also getting the message: newer designs such as Boeing's 787, due out by 2009, will not funnel cabin air through the engines.

Cabin pressure is another issue.

Most airlines maintain cabin air pressurization that is equivalent to what one would experience at an elevation of 8,000 feet — or 3,000 feet higher than the city of Denver. Yet at that level, passengers get 25 percent less oxygen than they would at sea level. This can be harmful to those with heart and other medical conditions. By contrast, private jets operate at a cabin air pressure equivalent to 5,000-6,000 feet. Why not commercial jets? AFA-CWA serves on numerous standard-setting committees in the industry and its active participation is leading to improvements. The new Boeing 787 also is being designed to operate at the 6,000-foot equivalent.

Pesticides present another problem. You would never spray Black Flag Roach Killer throughout your living room, dining room or kitchen, but airlines spray the passenger cabin — and passengers — with toxic pesticides on flights from the U.S. to 48 countries that require that cabins be "dis-insected." U.S. passengers are regularly exposed to pesticides on flights to Caribbean nations, Central and South America, Australia, New Zealand, India, Japan

## Cell Phones on Planes: Annoying and Dangerous



Valerie Walker

Most recently, the proliferation of cell phones and other electronic/wireless devices on aircraft has caused real concerns. Currently cell phone use is only permitted while the plane is at the gate. While some would like the government to lift or modify its restriction on the use of cell phones after takeoff, there is evidence that such use can interfere with aircraft electronic systems and distract passengers from hearing emergency safety instructions.

Valerie Walker, safety chair for AFA-CWA at United Airlines, also points out that the union is concerned about potential security risks if passengers with bad intentions could coordinate terrorist actions with passengers on the same flight or on the ground. "In this era of heightened security, it just doesn't make sense to loosen standards. We don't need to make it easy for terrorists to coordinate an attack," she noted.

"In addition, unrestricted cell phone use in the cabin would lead to heated arguments among passengers. At 40,000-feet we, as safety professionals, shouldn't have to also worry about having to control emotionally escalating incidents."

and other countries. AFA-CWA was instrumental in creating a government task force that resulted in current discussions with foreign nations over safer alternatives to pesticides in the cabin.

Radiation in flight is another concern. Higher than normal levels of cosmic and solar radiation penetrate the passenger cabin during flights near the Arctic while in route to Europe or Asia. AFA-CWA recommends that pregnant women — whether passengers or flight crew — limit flying in these areas because radiation levels can reach the equivalent of 10 chest x-rays an hour during periods of high solar flare activity, presenting a danger to the fetus. Solar flares occur only two or three times a year, so working to ensure that pregnant women

are not exposed during those periods may make a real difference to those babies and their families.

Last May, AFA-CWA urged the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to issue rulemaking on the subject, educating crew members about the risks, monitoring their radiation doses, and providing some level of protection to pregnant flight attendants that could also benefit passengers as well. FAA denied AFA-CWA's request. In the meantime, the union has urged pregnant flight attendants to always check radiation activity prior to flying.

For more airline safety information go to <http://ashsd.afacwa.org>.

Every advance in this half-century — Social Security, civil rights, Medicare, aid to education, one after another — came with the support and leadership of American labor.

— Jimmy Carter

## FLSA Victory: Chinese Daily News Workers Win Lawsuit

American bosses see the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act as a dinosaur and frequently treat it like it's extinct, with management standing in the way of workers trying to organize unions, finding ways to force overtime without pay and otherwise thwarting the law. After all, the consequences amount to a slap on the hand, if that.

But sometimes the little guys win. In January, a jury awarded beleaguered workers at the Chinese Daily News in the Los

Angeles area a minimum of \$2.5 million for the newspaper's violations of state and federal wage and hour laws.

The final amount will be determined by the court, which can assess higher damages because the violations were found to be willful.

Since 2001, Chinese Daily News employees have fought for a voice at work through The Newspaper Guild-CWA. Using threats, intimidation, illegal firings and other flagrant violations of labor law, management has blocked the workers' right to a union. In addition to being subject

*In the middle of their grueling battle against Chinese Daily News managers who routinely broke labor laws and intimidated workers, union members brought their pride and high spirits to the CWA convention in Los Angeles in 2004.*

*Wearing ceremonial lions' costumes and beating drums, the embattled workers hoped to bring good luck to all CWA members.*



to many unfair labor practices, employees filed wage and hour lawsuits over forced, unpaid overtime.

Though the newspaper workers finally have a victory to celebrate, CWA leaders say their six-year battle

for a union and management's continuing anti-union campaign shows how badly the system is tilted in favor of law-breaking employers.

"Management had too many years to harass and intimidate workers who should have long ago had their union," TNG-CWA President Linda Foley said. "This is a key example of why our labor election system is broken and why we need to make company neutrality and card-check recognition the law of the land through the Employee Free Choice Act."

# Workers Ready for Battle in Fight to Save FMLA

A CWA member employed as a cable splicer needed knee surgery to be able to continue working in manholes.

A flight attendant represented by AFA-CWA needs intermittent medical leave because of multiple sclerosis.

Another telecom member who has a son with asthma, is the primary caregiver for an elderly grandmother with Alzheimer's and has severe medical problems herself, fears for her job if she's unable to take Family and Medical Leave.

**T**hose are the struggles of just three workers among millions nationwide who have benefited from 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act — crucial legislation that was spearheaded by organized labor.

Thousands of them are speaking out, pleading with the Bush administration and Congress to keep their hands off the right to unpaid leave for personal and family illnesses and medical emergencies.

Corporate America has made it clear that chipping away at FMLA, if not getting rid of it altogether, is one of its top priorities. A Democratic Congress and the enormous pressure CWA and

other unions will put on lawmakers will make it harder for employers to succeed. Nevertheless, the White House is determined and has instructed the Labor Department to review the law.

If business gets its way, it would become harder for workers to use the law for unpaid medical leave — be it an hour for a doctor's appointment or a day or several weeks to deal with a serious illness or a family member's health.

The airline member with multiple sclerosis quoted above said in an e-mail to CWA that she rarely has to use the leave, but it helps her immensely to know it's there — especially when management regularly reminds workers that they can

be fired if they call in sick more than three days a year. "Please save the only thing that allows me to continue the job I love," she said.

Several members who work telecom jobs outdoors said the physical demands of the job itself have forced them to have knee operations. "The surgery was necessary for me to keep doing my job," one member said. "The average working Joe needs some kind of protection from big business. Leave FMLA alone."

CWA is fighting for FMLA not only for its members, but all workers. Along with other unions and with the support of Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), CWA is urging Congress not just to save FMLA but to expand it so that workers are guaranteed at least a week of paid sick time. Right now, all FMLA time is unpaid.

## U.S. Lags Behind Other Nations

Just as the Labor Department was wrapping up its public comment period on rolling back FMLA rights, a university study was released

*During my three-year bout with kidney cancer I had to be out of work several times a year for tests and blood transfusions. FMLA saved my job. I beat the cancer and was able to retire with my pension.*

— Verizon worker

showing that U.S. workers are worse off than workers in nearly every other country when it comes to medical leave. For instance:

- Out of 173 countries studied, 168 guarantee paid maternity leave, with 98 of countries offering at least 14 weeks. The United States joins Lesotho, Liberia, Swaziland and Papua New Guinea as the only countries without it. Legislation for paid leave has been introduced in Australia where new mothers presently get a year of unpaid time.

- Fathers get paid paternity leave in 65 countries, 31 of them offering 14 or more weeks.

- At least 145 countries provide paid sick leave, with 127 of them guaranteeing at least a week of sick time.

"More countries are providing the workplace protections that Americans can only dream of," said the study's author, Jody Heymann, director of the McGill University Institute for Health and Social Policy. "The U.S. has been a proud leader in adopting laws that provide for equal opportunity in the workplace, but our work/family protections are among the worst. It's time for a change."

For updates on the FMLA review process and a link to the McGill University report on family leave worldwide, go online to [www.cwa-union.org](http://www.cwa-union.org).

# CWA Uniquely Suited to Take On Big Media, FCC

**F**our years ago, the Federal Communications Commission began what could have been a routine and largely stealth process to rewrite media ownership rules so that giant companies could buy and control even more newspapers, TV stations and radio stations.

Thanks largely to CWA, the agency and America's media corporations were in for a rude awakening.

Under the leadership of CWA's newspaper and broadcast sectors, a groundswell of opposition rose from the union movement. Together with groups as diverse as peace activists, religious conservatives and the National Rifle Association, union members made it clear that media diversity is essential to democracy itself.

"Every American who believes that this country can and should remain a democracy — with informed citizens and honest debate — owes a debt of gratitude to The Newspaper Guild and NABET for recognizing the threat and acting to thwart it," said John Nichols, a journalist and media



Led by TNG-CWA Pres. Linda Foley and NABET-CWA Vice Pres. Jim Joyce, CWA members and staff met with FCC Commissioners Michael Copps and Jonathan Adelstein, the two Democrats on the five-member board, at the National Media Reform Conference in Memphis, Tenn. in January. Above, the group vows to continue to fight proposed FCC rule changes that would let giant media companies get even bigger and less diverse by further consolidating ownership of the country's TV and radio stations and newspapers.

reform activist who is one of the country's leading voices against media consolidation.

The two CWA media sectors helped sound the alarm in 2003 and are continuing to lead the fight today as the FCC is poised again to rollback ownership rules.

Union leaders are deeply worried about job cuts as big media companies put smaller ones out of business. But they are equally concerned about the grave harm being

done to the free exchange and diversity of ideas in what was once a vibrant media marketplace.

"To be informed and engaged, our citizens need to have access to as much information as possible about what is going on in their communities, their country and the world," NABET-CWA President John Clark said. "Media consolidation reduces the number of sources for information and restricts the viewpoints we hear."

Already, giant corporations such as General Electric, TimeWarner, News Corp and Viacom collectively own hundreds of TV stations, radio stations, newspapers, magazines, cable companies and online media services. Few communities have independent daily newspapers today and their TV and radio stations are controlled by a shrinking number of owners. Some airtime on so-called "local" TV news programs is being filled with canned content produced in a single regional or national studio.

In going to battle with the FCC, the combination of CWA's political clout, its membership diversity, its grassroots ability to organize, inform and mobilize members and its inside knowledge of the world of communications and media put the union in a unique position to give voice to the concerns of millions of Americans, leaders said.

"As the union that represents journalist and other media workers, we're at the vortex of the important fight to preserve journalism and the democratic values it fosters," said TNG-CWA President Linda Foley.

The fight four years ago was largely successful. While the

Republican majority on the five-member FCC tried to forge ahead changes giving more buying power to corporate media, a federal court ruling and Congress — whose members were inundated with calls, letters and e-mails — put on the brakes.

Now the FCC is reviewing the rules again. A third public hearing was held Feb. 23 in Harrisburg, Pa. Last October, NABET-CWA Vice President Jim Joyce testified before the full FCC at a hearing in Los Angeles.

"Our members know what happens when one company owns more than one TV station or a major TV station and the monopoly newspaper in the same market," Joyce told the panel. "The owner merges operations, slashes jobs and reduces the quantity and quality of the news."

For news on the latest FCC review of media ownership rules and more information about media consolidation, two excellent websites are [www.freepress.net](http://www.freepress.net) and [www.stopbigmedia.com](http://www.stopbigmedia.com).

# Labor a Global Voice for Fair Trade, Good Jobs

**W**hen it comes to companies sending jobs overseas, contracting out work inside the United States and urging the government to let more high-tech foreign workers take U.S. jobs, union members and the millions of unrepresented American workers have the same fears.

But union members have leverage that other workers don't and in the fight for fair trade and good jobs, the clout of a union such as IUE-CWA can make a big difference for everyone.

"Between the government's so-called 'fair' trade policies and corporations making billions by shutting down plants and shipping jobs overseas, the loud, strong voice of the labor movement is the only voice workers have — whether they belong to a union or not," IUE-CWA President Jim Clark said. "When we take a stand for good policies and fair laws, it benefits all workers."

Even under a Republican Congress, lobbying by CWA, other labor unions and the AFL-CIO helped keep CAFTA — the Central American Free Trade Agreement that is a cousin to NAFTA — at bay. The White House badly wants CAFTA, along with extended "fast track" trade authority for President Bush, allowing him to make trade deals without Congressional approval.

"Misguided trade policies have exacerbated stagnant wages and growing job insecurity in America today," AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said in response to

Bush's call for fast track. "We have lost more than 3 million manufacturing jobs since 2001, many to off-shore outsourcing, while an increasing number of white-collar service-sector jobs are also at risk. At the same time our trade deficit has ballooned to nearly \$800 billion."

WashTech-CWA, an organization of high-tech professionals that began in the Seattle area and has spread nationwide, is another leading voice in the fight against bad trade and jobs policies. Being a high-tech organization means making full use of online tools to get out news and action alerts, quickly and effectively mobilizing thousands of WashTech members and their CWA brothers and sisters.

An ongoing WashTech campaign that CWA has endorsed through convention resolutions opposes the federal government's requests to raise the cap on the number of H-1B visas, which allow high-tech workers from other countries to take jobs in the United States.

WashTech President Marcus Courtney said the visa fight is about



A Washington, D.C., rally outside the Department of Labor draws CWA and other union members to protest Bush administration policies that have cost millions of American jobs.

both American jobs and second-class treatment given to foreign workers. "We oppose the idea that the government should be expanding programs that undermine rights for all workers — foreign and domestic — while increasing corporate profits."

The H-1B visa cap is currently set at 65,000, with another 20,000 visas for foreign students who graduate from U.S. universities with

advanced degrees. High-tech executives want the cap raised to 115,000, which the last Congress rejected. Now pressure is being exerted on the new Congress.

WashTech-CWA has become an active government watchdog and notes that for the last three years, the administration has failed to comply with the requirement to submit an annual H-1B visa report to Congress. A WashTech campaign

led several elected officials to contact the Department of Homeland Security, which finally released two years of reports.

"They are still a year behind," WashTech said in an e-mail alert. "This makes it even more ridiculous to suggest an increase in the number of H-1B visas to be issued, as President Bush is suggesting."

## CWA Demands High Speed Internet for All

**H**igh speed Internet networks are the infrastructure of the 21st century.

They are the key to economic growth and competitiveness, to new education and training opportunities, to better health through telemedicine and to engaging all Americans — no matter where they live — in public discussions and debate.

That's why CWA and the AFL-CIO are working to make sure that everyone shares in the high speed Internet revolution.

CWA launched the Speed Matters campaign to press for public policies promoting universal, affordable high speed networks. Today, the vital technology has bypassed entire communities, both rural areas and inner cities.

"The United States is still following a 20th century Internet model, while much of the rest of the world has much higher standards," CWA President Larry Cohen said. "Currently we have no public policy at all in the United States governing the build out, speed and accessibility of high speed Internet networks, yet all of the other economic democracies, large and small, do



This puts us at a tremendous disadvantage."

The Speed Matters campaign calls for better data collection by the government to reveal who is and isn't being served. Currently, if a broadband provider serves just one customer within a zip code, the FCC counts the entire area as having broadband access.

CWA also is calling for a new and more reasonable definition of speed. The FCC considers 200 kilobits per second in one direction as high speed. Cohen said that's not only inadequate for basic functions such as streaming video and downloading large files, it makes telemedicine and other Internet advances virtually impossible to access.

In California, Michigan and other states, CWA is supporting video franchising legislation with build-out requirements and time-tables for providing access.

CWA also is fighting Verizon and other companies that are trying to sell landlines in less populated areas, such as northern New England, to small companies that can't afford to build out high speed Internet networks.

In New York, more than 100 members of CWA Local 1103 have volunteered to be part of the local's Speed Matters Action Committee. The SMAC activists are urging people to take CWA's online speed test

and writing letters to members of Congress on the critical need for true high speed Internet networks.

CWA's Speed Matters campaign is leading to new alliances pushing for full network rollouts in states that include Kentucky and West Virginia.

"The United States, which has been a leader in innovation, research and development for Internet networks, must now step up and adopt rational public policy if it is to bring the economic and social benefits of high speed Internet to all," Cohen said.

**Give Us Your Feedback**



The editorial staff of the CWA News would like to hear from you.

We invite you to send your comments, story ideas and letters to the editor to: [CWANews@cwa-union.org](mailto:CWANews@cwa-union.org).

Photos for possible publication are welcomed too. We're always looking for good photos of CWA workers on the job and members involved in mobilization campaigns. (Please make sure the pictures are shot or scanned at high resolution.)



**If you are making a decent salary in a non-union company, you owe that to the unions. One thing that corporations do not do is give out money out of the goodness of their hearts.**

— Molly Ivins

# Employee Free Choice Act, HR 800, Moving Through House

**H**eralded as American workers' best hope to form unions and bargain contracts with employers who brazenly break today's labor laws, the Employee Free Choice Act crossed its first hurdle in Congress in February as the House Education and Labor Committee voted to send it to the full House of Representatives.

The bill, H.R. 800, was introduced in the House in early February with the bipartisan support of 224 Democrats and seven Republicans. CWA's vigorous work on behalf of the bill included testimony before a House labor subcommittee and a full slate of meetings with lawmakers and media events during the third week of February.

Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.), who co-sponsored the bill with New York Republican Rep. Peter King, said the Employee Free Choice Act is crucial in an economy "more unequal than it has been at any



*CWA Local 2204 member Teresa Joyce testifies about why workers need the Employee Free Choice Act. The bill was passed in committee and was expected to pass the full House as the CWA News went to press.*

point since before the New Deal."

"We cannot continue on our nation's current path, where CEOs have complete freedom to negotiate lavish pay and retirement packages for themselves while workers have

no leverage to make their own lives better," Miller said.

Workers who have been fired, threatened and harassed trying to form unions testified about the importance of the Employee Free Choice Act at a Feb. 8 hearing before the House Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions.

Witnesses included CWA Local 2204 member Teresa Joyce, who talked about the difference it made when union-friendly Cingular took over anti-union AT&T Wireless. Unhappy with low wages and unfair treatment by supervisors, the then-AT&T Wireless workers in Virginia began trying to form a union through CWA.

"Once word reached management that we were trying to organize, they did everything they could to stop us," Joyce said. "Supervisors constantly threatened that AT&T Wireless would leave town and we

would lose our jobs. They also claimed that if we did succeed, our union dues would be so enormous we may actually need two jobs."

Joyce described other flagrant acts of intimidation and disrespect, from supervisors tearing down union flyers in the workers' break room to relentless harassment of union supporters. Months into their struggle, workers learned that Cingular was purchasing the company and that it would remain neutral if employees wanted to organize.

"It was a relief to know that we could finally speak openly about the union without the fear of employer retaliation," she said. "In 2005, a majority of us voted for the union by signing authorization cards and on Sept. 6, 2005, we were officially recognized as CWA members. Management even helped us arrange a cookout at the call center to celebrate."

Similar to what happens now at Cingular, the Employee Free Choice Act would allow workers nationwide to organize when a majority signs cards indicating they want union representation. The bill calls for first contract arbitration so that employers can't use the stalling tactics they get away with today to prevent workers from ever getting a con-

tract. Employers could be fined up to \$20,000 per violation. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers and other business groups are aggressively opposing the bill and Vice President Dick Cheney vowed recently that President Bush would veto it if Congress passes it.

Cheney made his comments in a speech before the virulently anti-union National Association of Manufacturers. He claimed the administration is concerned about protecting the rights of workers by maintaining secret ballot elections in representation drives —

a system NAM, its members and other businesses have illegally thwarted for decades.

"Dick Cheney concerned about the rights of workers — that's too funny," CWA President Larry Cohen said. "Let's be clear: The only thing this administration is concerned about is making sure that its big business friends can continue to threaten, intimidate and illegally fire union supporters with impunity."

In addition to King, the Republican House members who have signed onto the bill are Chris Shays of Connecticut, Steve LaTourette of Ohio, John McHugh and Vito Fossella of New York and Chris Smith and Frank LoBiondo of New Jersey.

## Historic Contract's Roots Run Deep

**B**rowsing CWA's website, a retired worker read that President Larry Cohen was inspired by a small bound contract signed in 1947 by Western Electric and the Association of Communications Equipment Workers (ACEW), a predecessor union of CWA. They wrote to Cohen:

"What a surprise it was to read that you kept a copy of ACEW's founding contract on your desk. My name is Richard Weaver and I suspect that my Dad's name, Ernest Weaver, is on that contract somewhere. I was reading your speech at the 68th national convention and thinking about how shocked my dad would be to see the changes in the labor movement. You don't know how much I appreciate your efforts for the labor movement."

Weaver's father was ACEW's founding president. Another man, Dan Harris, was the union's vice president. Forty-six years ago, Richard Weaver married Harris' daughter, Susan. They both signed the e-mail to Cohen, who responded:

"It was great to get your e-mail and, yes, your Dad's name 'E. Weaver' is on page 37, signing as president, May 20, 1947. The contract was given to me about 20 years ago by a member from Kansas City. It fits in a shirt pocket and is 37 pages long but says more about our roots than anything else I have seen.



*ACEW bargaining committee members including, from left, Vice Pres. Dan Harris and Pres. Ernest Weaver, gather in front of the CIO building in Washington, D.C., around 1950.*

"A critical element in this contract was national recognition for all installation work done by Western Electric. It is an amazing tribute to your father and Susan's father, Dan, that this was not only the model contract for CWA but the national recognition was a model for the CIO. National recognition was accomplished because of the amazing unity of this group. It remains a legend within our union."

Cohen explained how that bargaining unit, later a part of CWA, led mobilizations and picketing at AT&T and now has become part of the merged Alcatel Lucent.

"In a meeting with that management (in December) ... I told them quite forcefully we will carry on in the tradition of the ACEW and never

forget our roots or the commitment of those union builders," said Cohen.

Richard, as an electronics technician, became a member of the Machinists in California. Susan Weaver, as a nurses' aid, belonged to the Service Employees in Oregon. Both later went to work for Hewlett Packard, where they did not have union representation and from which they retired.

"We watch on the Internet the way society is changing," Richard said. Mentioning rising health care costs and erosion of retirement benefits at many companies, he said, "We've always supported unions — we know what our dads did — and we believe that unions are the only way to turn things around. Working people today need unions like never before."

## 'No Stripping' Campaign Fights for Jobs at Lucent

CWA members at Alcatel Lucent — and their counterparts worldwide — are fighting back against the company's assault on their jobs and their livelihoods.

Because Alcatel, which recently purchased Lucent, is French-owned, Lucent created a shell company, Secure Lucent, to meet U.S. government demands that contract work be performed by a U.S. firm. Lucent management was transferred to Secure Lucent, but the company has refused to transfer CWA-represented technicians. Instead, these workers are being stripped of their security clearances and their work taken away.

Some 65 CWA technicians will lose their security clearances and their livelihoods if Lucent has its way. CWA represents about 2,500 Lucent workers overall.

A video message to Lucent workers from CWA President Larry Cohen and Vice President Ralph Maly, Communications and Technologies, can be viewed at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XnkufTWsK3c>.

Lucent's blatant actions, plus an announced 12,500 job cuts worldwide, is the focus of CWA's "No Stripping" campaign, which will draw support from the labor movement, Congress, the public, European governments and others to stop the stripping of union jobs across the country and around the world.

## IN THE NEWS

### Union Support Building at Verizon Business



Verizon Business technicians celebrate upon learning that a majority of techs at numerous Verizon Business locations have signed cards supporting union representation.

Despite Verizon's efforts to build a wall between its union workers and its non-represented workforce at Verizon Business, a majority of former MCI employees at Verizon Business have shown union support at many locations throughout the country.

The workers have been signing up for union representation at an accelerated pace following Jan. 25 demonstrations outside the company's New York City and Boston headquarters. At the rallies, hundreds of Verizon's CWA- and IBEW-represented workers showed support for the workers by circulating a petition signed by more than 3,000 union members at Verizon.

This prompted 150 Verizon Business technicians to sign an "open letter to management" stating why they wanted a union. One of the signers, John Lindner, is a field tech from Long Island who is currently stationed in Iraq. "While I am defending the country," he said, "my co-workers are defending our job security and are fighting for better working conditions." His comments were echoed by a Verizon Business tech who attended the rally in New York. "I want to express the thanks that I and other workers at Verizon Business felt when our union co-workers came downtown in great numbers and in the cold to support our bid for fair wages and benefits and, most importantly, the right to organize."

"The Verizon Business techs have rejected the company's fear tactics by showing support for union representation," said CWA District 1 Vice President Chris Shelton.

### NABET Members Take on McGraw-Hill Union-Busting

NABET-CWA members on the East Coast are backing their West Coast brothers and sisters in their fight for fairness at the McGraw-Hill owned TV station, KGTV, in San Diego, Calif.

McGraw-Hill, which had a good relationship with station employees for more than 50 years, went on the attack in 2006, demanding job cuts and seeking to replace union positions with non-union work. Negotiations were bitter, and the company presented Local 59054 with a final offer that the union rejected. Last March, KGTV unilaterally imposed parts of the final offer.

NABET members have been mobilizing ever since, and members recently turned out at McGraw-Hill headquarters in New York City to leaflet about the company's union-busting tactics and refusal to bargain.

The leaflet urged people to go to a new website, [www.McGraw-HillUnfair.com](http://www.McGraw-HillUnfair.com) to learn more and take action. Local 59054 President Dennis Csillag said his members are grateful for the help and solidarity from their NABET-CWA brothers and sisters, which was a big success. "We can tell New Yorkers care by the record number of hits to the website," he said.



Shop Stewards Al Villar, left, and Steve Francis of NABET-CWA Local 51016 in New York City handbill in front of the McGraw-Hill building to protest the company's union-busting.

## Bahr to Head Housing Program

CWA President Emeritus Morton Bahr has been elected president of the Elderly Housing Development and Operations Corp. (EHDOC). Formed with the help of unions in 1978 to develop and manage affordable housing for low income seniors, the organization operates and manages 45 buildings in 14 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia.

"It's a privilege to serve with such dedicated people, and it's heartwarming to see what we've been able to accomplish for so many seniors," said Bahr, who previously served on EDHOC's board with several other labor leaders.

EDHOC seeks grants from the federal government under Department of Housing and Urban Development programs and builds or renovates buildings for low-income seniors. Once built, the organization manages the buildings.



Seniors address envelopes as part of an EDHOC campaign to secure funding for low- and moderate income housing.

EDHOC's mission is to allow seniors to live independently and age in dignity with their peers. The average age of residents is 79. The organization strives to provide a community through assistance, activities and problem solving. Every EDHOC property has a service coordinator who handles both medical and non-medical needs of its residents.

There is an urgent need for more housing for low income seniors in the United States, said EDHOC Executive

Director Steve Protulis. The average waiting time for units is two-and-a-half years. Last year the Bush administration cut back the HUD funds for senior housing, but Congress reinstated them to the previous year's level, for 4,000 new units.

EDHOC rescued 58 seniors after Hurricane Katrina and placed them in one of its 11 properties in Louisiana. Its newest building in Shaker Heights, Cleveland, opened in February with 42 units.

## Join the Retirees' Council — For Life

To help retired members stay connected to CWA, and to harness their energy for protecting key retiree issues — pensions, health care, Social Security and Medicare — CWA is now offering a Lifetime Membership in the Retired Members' Council for a one-time payment of \$25.

The Executive Board created the lifetime Council memberships in response to CWA's Ready for the Future convention resolution calling for doubling the number of Council members to 50,000 by

2009. Previously, Council membership required payment of annual fees.

"We must do a better job of realizing the tremendous potential that CWA retirees can play in our employer and legislative campaigns to maintain and protect the hard-won benefits we all count on when we retire," said CWA Secretary-Treasurer Barbara J. Easterling.

Under the program, the 20,000 current members of CWA local retiree chapters will automatically be enrolled in the program. In February, CWA mailed a Lifetime Council

membership brochure and application to 128,000 retirees not currently belonging to local chapters.

To become a lifetime Council member, retirees can join directly online at a new website — [www.CWaretirees.com](http://www.CWaretirees.com). On the website, retirees will find information about the activities of the Retired Members' Council as well as money-saving discount programs available to Council members through the CWA Union Privilege program.

## Aid Available for Distance Learning

Empire State College of the State University of New York is now accepting applications for two new Morton Bahr Distance Learning Scholarships for the 2007-2008 academic year.

The scholarship program honors CWA's president emeritus, an Empire State College graduate, for his commitment to lifelong adult learning.

Since its inception in 2001, the Bahr scholarship has helped 29 people continue their education through distance learning. Union workers, family members and/or domestic partners are eligible.

Scholarship students can work toward associate's, bachelor's and master's degrees through a combi-

nation of face-to-face meetings with faculty, online courses and small study groups. They also may earn credit for college-level learning from work and life.

Students will be eligible for scholarship funding as long as they complete at least one or two courses per semester (four to eight credits). Once enrolled as a Bahr scholar, students also must apply for other federal, state, corporate or union financial aid for which they may be eligible.

The deadline for Bahr scholarship applications is June 1, 2007, and award decisions will be announced by the end of July for fall enrollment. Scholarship awards fully cover

tuition, fees and special services.

To submit an application online or to download the form, visit [www.esc.edu/bahr](http://www.esc.edu/bahr). To have an application mailed, candidates should send an e-mail to [special.programs@esc.edu](mailto:special.programs@esc.edu) or call (800) 867-5941.

*The Bahr Scholarship Program is funded in part by CWA locals and members. To contribute, send a check payable to Empire State College Foundation Bahr Scholarship to the attention of Yvette Herrera, CWA President's Office, 501 Third St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.*