



Labor Fax

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LABOR DAY MESSAGE

By Charles Wovkanech & Laurel Brennan

Based on current estimates, more than 47 million Americans currently lack health insurance and are unable to afford either routine wellness visits or emergency medical care. Furthermore, even for many with insurance, co-pays and deductibles associated with their plan put necessary care out of reach, and insurance providers, more interested in turning a profit than providing care, continue to expand their lists of non-covered procedures.

America's failure to adopt a national and universal health plan also dramatically undermines our nation's ability to maintain a healthy economy. Instead of rewarding union contractors and responsible employers for contributing to their workers' health care, our system actually places them at a disadvantage as they are faced with the reality of paying premiums inflated by the cost of providing care to the uninsured. Furthermore, American companies find themselves unable to compete in the global marketplace without shifting jobs overseas to take advantage of the savings realized by employing workers in nations where government-funded health care exists.

While the labor movement has continued to lead the crusade for affordable health care, the Bush Administration has failed to offer any meaningful solutions to this epidemic. In fact, in a letter sent to health officials nationwide on August 17, the Bush Administration has chosen to adopt new standards which will likely hamper the efforts of states like New Jersey from offering coverage to children of middle income families.

And so, this Labor Day, union members across the country are renewing their call for a commitment from lawmakers to bring about meaningful health care reform. This reform must be nothing less than universal health care for all which includes comprehensive and affordable coverage, choice of medical care providers and effective mechanisms for controlling costs.



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We will continue to fight at the bargaining table to protect and improve the remaining benefits of workers. Employer efforts to increase the burden workers face for health care, without comparable increases to salary, will not be accepted.

We will continue to support non-union workers in their efforts to exercise their legally protected right to a voice at work so that they too may enjoy the benefits of collective bargaining. With 80% of private sector union members currently receiving health care benefits, as opposed to only 49% of non-union workers with coverage, the union difference is clear. Legislation such as the Employee Free Choice Act, which eases the path for workers to form unions, will remain at the top of our legislative agenda.

We will continue to hold elected officials accountable for their actions, or lack of action, on this important topic. With the Presidential campaign in full swing, we are listening closely to all of the proposals put on the table, and will refrain from supporting any candidate for the nation's highest office unless he or she shows the ability, and political will, to achieve the goals we have laid out for real reform.

Finally, once an endorsement is offered to a Presidential candidate, we will mobilize a record number of union voters in support of their bid, ensuring that the President elected in 2008, unlike their predecessor, is willing to stand up to those special interests opposed to health care reform and bring about real change.

ATLANTIC CITY ORGANIZING VICTORIES

Casino workers in Atlantic City achieved two big victories last week by forming unions with the United Auto Workers. On Thursday, August 23, slot technicians at Caesars voted 20-11 for the union, while on Saturday, August 25, casino dealers at Tropicana voted 626-157 for a voice at work. With more than 3,600 casino workers forming unions with the UAW this year, the labor movement has never been stronger in Atlantic City. Speaking in a united voice, our newest brothers and sisters in labor will stand up to casino management that has, while rewarding themselves with multi-million dollar compensation packages, cut the wages and health benefits of workers.

RUTGERS-UNION REACH ACCORD

Faculty and graduate students have reached an agreement for a new four-year contract. Their current contract expired in June. Nearly 2,500 union members, represented by the AFT, will vote on this proposal next month.

LABOR-TO-LABOR WALKS

With just over 2 months remaining until Election Day, Labor's Political Program will make the difference for all of our endorsed State Senate, General Assembly and Labor Candidates. This year's labor walks will begin on Saturday, September 8, in both Atlantic and Mercer counties, and be extended to additional counties throughout the month. Walks will occur between 9:00 A.M. - 12:00 noon. For more information, please contact John Shea at 609-989-8730.

PRESIDENTIAL FORUM

New Jersey State AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Laurel Brennan will be a panelist at a forum hosted by the Hall Institute of Public Policy and Rutgers' Center for Women and Work discussing what the next President must know about women and the economy. This event will be held at on the Douglas Campus on Tuesday, September 18, 2007. This event begins at 9:30 a.m. For more information call 732-932-0052.

SHARING OUR SUCCESS

Earlier this month, New Jersey State AFL-CIO Legislative Affairs Coordinator Eric Richard participated on two panels at the AFL-CIO's Workers' Voice Legislative Issues Forum in Chicago. Eric shared with conference participants tips and strategies employed by the New Jersey State AFL-CIO in our efforts to pass legislation on the misclassification of independent contractors, signed by Governor Corzine, as well as Paid Family Leave which the Governor has committed to signing by the end of this year.

SIGN ON THE LINE

A-1044 (Van Drew / Sweeney), a bill which seeks to reform the current Worker Adjustment and Retraining Act (WARN Act) by extending the current 60 day notification requirement for a mass layoff to 90 days, has passed both the General Assembly and the State Senate. The bill would also provide severance pay for certain workers if the employer is not in compliance with the Act. If this bill is signed into law, federal efforts which are also underway to reform the WARN Act would gain momentum. On behalf of our affiliates and working families across the state, the New Jersey State AFL-CIO respectfully encourages Governor Corzine to sign this bill into law.

CUSTOMIZED TRAINING GRANTS

Local unions and employers can obtain funds for employee training programs through the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development Customized Training Grants. Funds for training are available to upgrade skills of new or current employees. Resources are also available for employers moving to or expanding in New Jersey. Grants awarded require approval by the employer and local union. For information, please contact Employment and Training Coordinator Paul Cenerino at 609-989-8730.

UNION LABEL WEEK

September 3-8, 2007 is Union Label week. During this week union members are encouraged to remind their neighbors about the value of buying union and the benefits of having a voice at work. For more information visit www.unionlabel.org.

Upcoming Events

September 5, 2007	PEC Meeting Trenton
September 25-26, 2007	Legislative Conference Bally's Atlantic City
October 16, 2007	Retirees Legislative Conference UAW Region 9 Edison
October 23-25, 2007	LEAP Train-the-Trainer Labor Education Center New Brunswick
November 6, 2007	Election Day

LABOR DAY EVENTS

Several events will be held around the state to mark Labor Day which will be celebrated this year on Monday, September 3, 2007:

The Southern New Jersey Central Labor Council will hold their 113th annual Peter J. McGuire Labor Day Celebration on Friday, August 31, 2007. The event begins with a breakfast, held on the Battleship New Jersey at 9:00 a.m. A wreath laying ceremony will take place immediately after the breakfast at the Peter J. McGuire Memorial. For more information on this event call Nicole Nestopoulous at 856-663-1555.

On Sunday, September 2, 2007 the American Labor Museum/Botto House National Landmark, Borough of Haledon and the City of Paterson will hold their 16th Annual Labor Day Parade. Joseph Cheff, Passaic County Education Association President, will serve as the Grand Marshal of this parade which begins at 1:30 p.m. at the American Labor Museum and concludes at the Great Falls in Paterson. A festival with food, fun and entertainment will follow the parade.

On Tuesday, September 4, 2007, the Hudson County Central Labor Council will host an end-of-summer Labor Day BBQ at the Marine Engineers Beneficial Association Hall located at 37 Edward Hart Drive, Jersey City. The BBQ starts at 6:00 p.m. Please RSVP to HudsonCLC@laborcouncil.org

The final Labor Day event for 2007 will be held on Friday, September 7, 2007. Sponsored by the Essex-West Hudson Labor Council AFL-CIO, festivities will include a pre-parade program beginning at 5:00 p.m. at Newark City Hall, followed by a parade led by Joe Cioffi, President, Carpenters Local 1342.