

Local 108 Pilots Strike

Pilots Without a Contract For More Than Two Years

The Professional Helicopter Pilots Association (PHPA), OPEIU Local 108 has launched an historic first nationwide strike of an organized helicopter pilot workforce, calling for all PHI, Inc. and AirEvac Services pilots to cease all flight operations. The union estimates that the strike, which began September 20, has had a major impact on PHI's operations. More than 300 pilots are participating in the strike.

Local 108 pilots have been working without a contract since their agreement ended May 31, 2004. The union and PHI have been in federal mediation since August 2005, and the strike comes after a release from mediation and the completion of a statutory 30-day cooling-off period.

"This action is the result of more than two years of stalled and unsuccessful contract negotiations," Local 108 President Stephen Ragin said. "This strike action is necessary to break the impasse and move negotiations forward. Our goal is to achieve an industry leading, fully-retroactive contract for all PHI pilots."

Local 108 represents helicopter and air-plane pilots of PHI and its subsidiary, AirEvac. The pilots work in PHI-AirEvac's



Pilot Dave Hawkins cheers the passing vehicles as they honk their horns in support of the Local 108 job action.

Arizona-based Air Medical Operations and the remaining pilots are employed flying offshore in Gulf of Mexico Operations.

"Our pilots have continued to serve our valued customers for more than two years without a contract," Chief Steward for Air

Medical Operations, Captain John Strickland said. "The pilots demonstrated considerable professionalism and patience during negotiations. While we are negotiating provisions to improve service to our

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Editorial



Questions About the Bush Administration's Energy Policy

By Michael Goodwin, International President

One of the greatest myths fostered by the Bush administration is that it is responsible for tax cuts for working people. Oh, there have been tax cuts, alright, enough to swell the national debt by trillions of dollars. But the tax cuts have been disproportionately doled out to the wealthiest of Americans. Working families may be saving a few dollars under the Bush tax cuts, but those savings are more than wiped out by the high cost of gasoline and fuel oil.

The price of gasoline, which reached a peak of more than \$3 a gallon in many areas, is the Bush administration's energy policy. When he was campaigning for president the first time around, Mr. Bush promised to put together an energy commission to address America's needs. He kept his word, only his administration refused to tell the public the names of those who served on this body, which met behind closed doors in 2001. Today, five years later, the administration continues to prevent the public from learning the names of the "advisors" that served on its energy commission, in spite of several lawsuits and Freedom of Information Act requests to learn their identities.

At the same time, however, the administration has never denied published reports that one of the people who served on this advisory board was Ken Lay, a big financial supporter and personal friend of Mr. Bush, who was the head of Enron, an energy company that cooked its books, went belly-up and left tens of thousands of its employees and investors holding the bag. "Kenny Boy," as President Bush was fond of calling Mr. Lay, died before he was to begin serving a prison sentence for his misdeeds.

Recent financial reports from oil companies have led some to speculate about some of the other "advisors" that may have served on President Bush's so-called Energy Commission. It turns out, for example, that while Americans are paying the highest prices ever for gasoline, heating oil and other products that are made from petroleum, such as carpeting, Exxon Mobil Corporation has announced that it earned a \$10.4 billion profit in the second quarter of 2006! That represents a 36 percent increase in profits over the previous year's second quarter, about the same percentage as the increase in gasoline prices over the same time period. The \$10.4 billion profit Exxon Mobil made in just three months represents \$140 per U.S. resident per year!

It is equally revealing to see what other oil companies did in the same quarter. For example, Shell Oil, the world's third-largest oil company, said its profit jumped 40 percent in the second quar-

ter of 2006 to \$7.32 billion. That means that in just three months Shell earned enough money to represent \$100 per year for every person living in the U.S. And Conoco Phillips, the third-largest oil company in the U.S., said its profits leaped 65 percent, to \$5.19 billion, during the same three months. That represents \$60 per year for every person living in the U.S. If you ever buy gasoline, heating oil or some of the dozens of other products made from petroleum, these figures show that the so-called Bush tax cut for you has been completely wiped out at the fuel pump.

Fortunately, elected officials have not ignored these profit figures.

"It's clearer than ever that we need a new direction in energy policy," New York Senator Hillary Clinton said. "We need an energy policy that puts us on a path to a clean energy future instead of lining the pockets of big oil executives."

"The fact that big oil is pulling in record-breaking profits while most Americans are breaking the bank to fill up their gas tanks is both despicable and mind-boggling," New York's other Senator, Chuck Schumer, said. "We need a real national energy policy that reins in energy costs."

Many Democrats in Washington are suggesting an extra tax on the excessive profits the oil companies are earning. The companies respond that this is a bad idea because it would cut down on their ability to drill for more oil. The same companies have again found an ally in the Bush administration, which is publicly opposed to the Democrats' suggestion. Instead, the administration's Energy Secretary, Samuel Bodman, has suggested that oil companies could voluntarily divert some of their high profits into drilling for more oil and building more refineries.

That's some energy policy, isn't it? While working people pay more than twice the price for gasoline and heating oil than they were paying when President Bush was first elected, his administration is doing nothing about the major cause of this outrageous increase: The profits that all the oil companies are making. In addition, his administration still won't provide a list of names of those who served on the commission that devised his energy policy. But few of us would be surprised if we learned that a slew of oil company executives were included on that list.

Virtually everyone admits that the U.S. needs a comprehensive energy policy. But after more than five years in office, the Bush administration's energy policy is reduced to one cold fact: It's nothing but hot air.

New Membership Benefits for Taxi Drivers in Las Vegas

OPEIU and the United Steelworkers union have formed an alliance and launched a new campaign to increase membership among taxi drivers in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The Alliance program has arrived in Las Vegas after months of planning. The "Alliance," involving ITPE, Local 4873, will provide "members-only" membership benefits for taxi and limousine drivers employed by 10 unionized companies in Las Vegas, to build the union and make it stronger. International President Michael Goodwin worked closely with USW President Leo Gerard and ITPE President John Conley to launch the program.

In Las Vegas, the ITPE represents drivers employed by Yellow, Checker, Star and Henderson taxi companies, and the USW represents drivers employed by ABC Union, A-North Las Vegas, ACE, Bell Trans, Vegas Western and Whittlesea. Together, the two unions represent more than 4,000 drivers and more than 1 million employees in the United States and Canada.

To announce the program, the Alliance undertook a well-planned advertising campaign, including a billboard and articles with information explaining the program in the taxi drivers' magazine, *TripSheet*, along with the cover article. The campaign culminated with a launch event held October 10, 2006, where drivers were invited to hear about the program, sign up with the union, as well as be eligible for some great door prizes.

The Alliance will provide members of the union with death benefits, disability benefits, legal representation before the Taxi Authority, a Perks national discount card, a Careington health service card, scholarships, a free annual towing/service call, AFL-CIO "Union Plus" benefit programs and much more at no additional cost to the driver!

The Alliance's theme is "It pays to belong," aptly named as the membership benefits program is designed to provide benefits that will greatly exceed membership dues of less than \$1 a day.

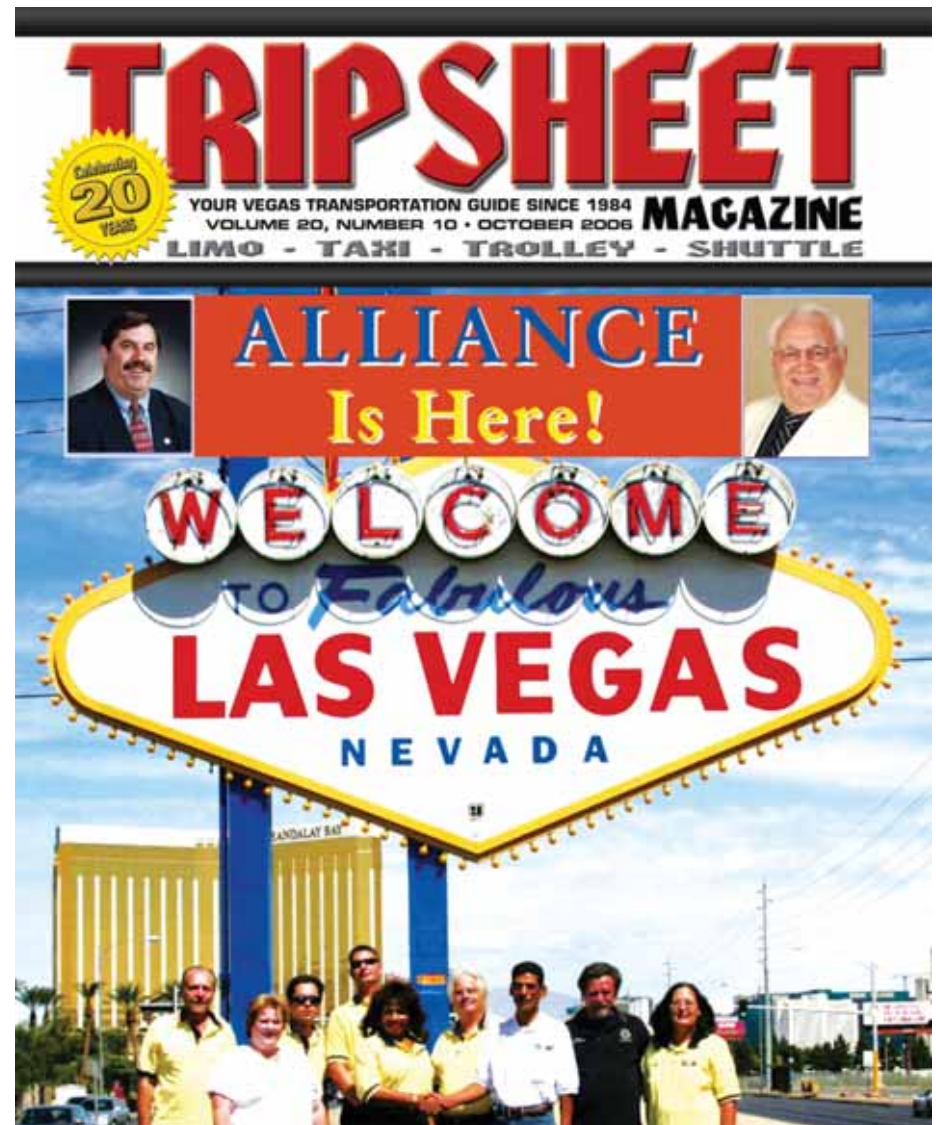
"We're showing drivers in Las Vegas who are currently covered by a union contract, but are not members, the tangible benefits of union membership," Goodwin said. "Las Vegas is the first city we are testing

the program in, but it will soon be available in six other cities throughout the country.

"Today's changing economic climate demands new approaches to organizing," Goodwin continued. "Offering workers real

benefits that are only available if they become union members is an innovative way to organize."

For more information about the Alliance program in Las Vegas, visit www.alliancelv.org.



Pictured is the cover of *TripSheet* magazine, announcing Alliance's new benefits program available to union taxi drivers in Las Vegas, Nevada. Pictured top left is Leo Gerard, president of the United Steelworkers (USW), AFL-CIO, and John Conley, president of the Industrial, Technical and Professional Employees Union (ITPE), AFL-CIO, OPEIU, Local 4873. Pictured are drivers Mike Warzlow (Shop Steward, Henderson), Stacy Pearse (Recording Secretary, USW 711-A, ABC Union), Stan Rozenberg (Shop Steward, Star), Eldon Alvord (Shop Steward, Star), T. Ruthie Jones (Vice President, ITPE), Tom Krueger (Organizing Representative, ITPE), Hussein Abdelgilil (President, USW Local 711-A, Whittlesea), John Goins (Vice President and Organizing Coordinator, USW Local 711-A) and Kathy Boatman (Shop Steward, ABC Union). Jones and Abdelgilil are joining hands to underscore the Alliance between the OPEIU and the United Steelworkers.

Letters to the Editor

Dear President Goodwin:

On behalf of the 650 pilots working at Air Methods Corporation, we would like to express our sincerest appreciation for all that the OPEIU has done for us, and our industry.

The improvements made in the helicopter industry since you first helped the pilots at Air Logistics achieve their initial contract in 1999 are significant and undeniable. Starting salaries have doubled, benefits improved, work rules clearly defined, and grievance procedures established and utilized with great success.

In our humble opinion, none of this would have been possible without the untiring efforts and expertise of Paul Bohelski. His commitment to, and compassion for, the people he represents is inspirational. His knowledge of the helicopter industry is second only to his knowledge of the Railway Labor Act. He is a skilled negotiator, and a professional in every sense of the word.

Paul has earned our friendship and our trust, and we are truly grateful for all that he and the OPEIU have done and continue to do for us.

Sincerely,

Dan McDade, Jeff Stackpole, Scott Groshong, Steve Grace, Troy Montanez
AMC Pilots, OPEIU/PHPA Local 109 Negotiating Committee



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

You can also reach us on the Web: <http://www.opeiu.org>

Dear President Goodwin:

On behalf of the officers and membership of Local 95, I would like to express our sincere appreciation and our thanks to you, all of the OPEIU staff, and the International Representatives for your financial assistance as well as your continued support of our efforts at Local 95.

You know the difficulties that we had been experiencing during the last several years. Your support and encouragement has helped us to resolve most of those issues and move forward. You have provided the leadership and the assistance that was necessary for our Local to survive. For this, Local 95, its members, and officers will always be grateful.

In Solidarity,

Jim Hintz, President
 OPEIU Local 95

Dear Jeff Rusich:

On behalf of Bobby Smith and the Air Log mechanics, I want to thank you, Mike Goodwin and OPEIU for your magnanimous support of a man who has been victimized for his efforts to organize a difficult and unenlightened group.

This kind gesture by OPEIU is what separates our International from all other organizations, corporations and governments, and contributes to the intense pride I carry every day as a member of this special federation. The dedication I see from you, Mike, Kevin Kistler, Paul Bohelski and everyone else I've worked with in the OPEIU is an inspiration to me, and should be a model for anyone who truly wishes to do things the way they should be done, the right way.

Thanks again,

Ken Bruner

Merger and Consolidation Committee Makes Recommendations to Executive Board



The OPEIU Merger and Consolidation Committee makes a presentation to the OPEIU Executive Board at its meeting on Sunday, June 25, 2006. Committee members pictured left to right are Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin Kistler, Vice President Phillip Pope, Committee Chairman and Vice President Richard Lanigan, and Vice Presidents Judith Zenk and Aaron Sanders.

WHITE COLLAR

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Local 2001 Wins More Than \$2.5 Million for Its Members

In the past year, OPEIU Local 2001 in Knoxville, Tennessee, has won more than \$2.5 million for the 800 employees it represents at the TVA, the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Because the TVA is a government-owned utility, and federal workers cannot legally go on strike, Local 2001 has grievance/arbitration rights, as well as rights to “interest” arbitration, which means if negotiations fail to reach a complete contract agreement, the disagreements are taken before arbitrators who rule on the proposals.

The \$2.5 million was won in arbitration awards or contract dispute resolutions that avoided an interest arbitration hearing.

Additional victories include:

- A ruling in June 2005 by interest arbitrators awarding OPEIU-represented workers an additional \$700,000 in salary increases on top of negotiated raises.

- The same arbitrators also ordered TVA to reinstate a \$500 per person yearly flex-benefit credit totaling more than \$450,000 for OPEIU members. Because the TVA then announced the payment was “one-time only,” Local 2001 has filed suit to make TVA honor the arbitrator’s award. If the court rules in OPEIU’s favor, the award could cost TVA an additional \$1.6 million.

Local 2001 President and Business Representative Phillip Pope said, “We believe the arbitrator’s award is clear and unambiguous, and we are confident that the courts will eventually rule in our favor.”

- In May 2006, Local 2001 won an arbitration award estimated to cost TVA another \$700,000. The issue stemmed from TVA’s delayed implementation of a job classification plan whereby many former positions were combined into one with different wage rates. In most cases, employees received wage increases solely as a result of reclassification.

- An arbitration ruling that ordered TVA to move positions back into the bargaining unit that it had made “management.” The settlement increases the salary for seven employees by \$10,000; along with \$2,500 in back pay.

Pope, who also serves as the OPEIU International Vice President for the Southeast Region, says, “With the success we’ve had recently, we are encouraging employees at TVA to join the union. All of the states where TVA employees are employed have right-to-work laws and employees do not have to belong to the union. It takes a lot of resources to take on a giant employer like TVA and to be suc-

cessful; \$2.5 to \$4 million is a lot of extra money for 800 employees.” As a union representative for more than 35 years, Pope has always believed that the union is stronger when more employees belong to the union. Without the resources, the success Local 2001 had in the past 12 months would not have been possible. He thanked the members for their dedication to the union over the years, and hoped the recent success is encouragement for the non-members to realize the need to keep the union strong and join OPEIU.

Local 2001 is an amalgamated local representing employees at various locations throughout the Southeast. The majority of members are employed at the Tennessee Valley Authority, a government-owned utility with employees in Tennessee and six bordering states. With more than 10,000 employees, TVA negotiates with several different unions, including the 800 employees represented by Local 2001.

International Representative Faye Orr serves as OPEIU’s chief spokesperson at the bargaining table and is assisted by the other members of Local 2001’s Negotiating Committee — Pope, Glenn Taylor, Sheila King, Linda Hutchison, Twila Womack and Wendy Stooksbury.

Michigan Governor Signs Safety and Health Initiative for State Employees

Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm formalized the State’s renewed dedication to the safety of MAGE/OPEIU Local 2002 members and all state employees with the May 4, 2006 signing of the Safety and Health Policy Statement.

The policy recognizes that safe workplaces can help avoid the financial and emotional impact of accidents on workers and their families, said MAGE President Dale Threehouse, who attended the signing with MAGE Labor Relations Director John DeTizio.

To achieve this vision, the State will integrate safety and health into department operations by having a continuous performance improvement process. The State will also participate in teams with MAGE and the rank-and-file in an effort to reduce injuries and illnesses. The Office of the State Employer has also pledged its commitment to work together with MAGE to improve workplace safety and health.



MAGE/OPEIU Local 2002 President Dale Threehouse and Labor Relations Director John DeTizio attend signing of Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm’s Safety and Health Policy Statement.

PATCO Convention Relives Strike

Hundreds of current and former air traffic controllers relived the strike of the early 1980s and discussed the current state of the industry at the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) convention August 2-3, 2006 at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. PATCO is an OPEIU affiliate.

OPEIU President Michael Goodwin was among attendees at the convention that explored the history of the organization, and marked the 25th anniversary of the 1981 PATCO nationwide strike. PATCO members suffered through one of the most difficult strikes in union history that resulted in the firing of 11,541 highly skilled professionals and a ban for life from ever returning to the industry. On August 12, 1993, President Clinton lifted the ban on the rehiring of the PATCO strikers, but the FAA has, to a significant degree, ignored that order. To date, only 846 PATCO controllers have been allowed to return to work.

“The FAA continues with their illegal lock-out and discriminating policies against PATCO controllers,” PATCO President Ron Taylor said.

The need for a strong union is evident, thus PATCO’s affiliation with OPEIU. “PATCO continues to seek justice for strik-



Pictured at the PATCO convention from left to right are: (standing) PATCO President Ron Taylor, PATCO Vice President of the Southern Region Ron Palmer, OPEIU President Michael Goodwin, (seated) Assistant to the OPEIU Secretary-Treasurer Juliet Casey, PATCO Secretary-Treasurer Carol Ann Taylor, and Assistant to the OPEIU President Colleen Pedersen.

ers in courts of law, organize air traffic controllers in the private sector and improve working conditions for all air traffic control professionals,” Taylor said. “The FAA has failed to learn from the strike and still maintains its hard line approach in dealing

with its workforce. The FAA’s recent self-imposed forced contract on the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA) and its members clearly reflect an anti-union attitude, foretelling that turbulent times may lie ahead.”

Local 23 “Relays for Life”

On June 23-24, more than 20 members of Local 23 who work at the Metropolitan Development Council walked in the “Relay for Life,” held in Tacoma, Washington. The relay is a 24-hour walking marathon that raises money for the American Cancer Society.

Members of both teams proudly wore Local 23 t-shirts as they walked. Chief Shop Steward Doris Tucker was captain of Team Menehune, which means “little soldiers of paradise,” and the other team, Thrill Sea-kers, was led by member Liz Yotty.

Local 23 conducts fundraising activities for the event all year long, including a sweetheart dance and a spaghetti feed. In the relay, Team Menehune came in second place overall and both teams combined raised more than \$4,000.

The Metropolitan Development Council is a non-profit community action agency that provides a wide variety of social services in Pierce County. Local 23 has represented workers there since 1980.



Members of Team Menehune!

Local 108 PHPA Pilots Strike

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customers and to enhance safety, we ask customers, vendors, suppliers and contractors of PHI-AirEvac to support our efforts until these issues are settled. Arizona has one of our nation's highest ratios of EMS helicopters per capita and public safety is not jeopardized by our decision to strike."

The company is doing everything in its power to break the union, even threatening pilots with permanent replacement. In an effort to attract pilots to cross the strike line and break the union, the company instituted a new bonus plan that increases wages significantly. In some cases, this new bonus plan would nearly double a pilot's salary over his current level. During negotiations the company insisted the union's economic proposals were too expensive, but now the company has greatly exceeded any proposal the union had at the bargaining table.

"It's clear the company's strategy is to attempt to break the union," Ragin said. "Our members' resolve is solid, knowing that without the protection of a contract, any new bonus plan could and would be discontinued." The company's intimidation plan also includes cancelling employees' health insurance, even though premiums have been paid. "A company that would deny insurance to someone with sick family members, after they have already paid the premiums, is not concerned about their employees," Ragin said.

Support of the union's strike has come from around the world. "Helicopter pilot unions from as far away as Europe have pledged financial support as well as other

U.S.-based pilot unions," International Representative Paul Bohelski said.

PHI, formerly Petroleum Helicopters, Inc., operates helicopters in support of offshore petroleum exploration and production in the Gulf of Mexico. PHI's customers include several major oil companies including BP USA, Exxon and Shell. In addition,

PHI provides airplane and helicopter air medical transportation services nationwide through AirEvac, with 66 EMS bases in more than 15 states.

A strike update will be provided in the next issue of *White Collar*. Further information can also be found at the website, www.local108pilots.org.



Local 108 pilots picket at the main PHI facility in Lafayette, Louisiana.



Air Med pilots picket in Phoenix, Arizona. These pilots have been picketing every day in 102 degree heat!

Christine Page Sworn In as International Vice President

Christine Page is sworn in as International Vice President, filling the vacancy left on the Executive Board by the retirement of Judy Solkovitz. Pictured are OPEIU Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Wohlforth, Page, and President Michael Goodwin.



What a Difference it Will Make if De

Why The Midterm Elections Are So Important To Working Families

Public opinion polls show that people are fed up with the policies of President Bush and the GOP-controlled Congress. Going into the November midterm elections, the president's approval rating is just over 40 percent and that of the Republican "do nothing" Congress is even worse.

This means Democrats could make huge gains in both the House and Senate, possibly regaining control of both. Just think what that would mean to working families.

To take over, Democrats must defeat a significant number of incumbents, one of the toughest tasks in politics. But this year it's possible, with public anger at the Iraq war, high gas prices, stagnant wages, the botched government response to Katrina and unaffordable housing, health care and college tuitions.

Downward Mobility

Most Americans are appalled at the tax cuts the Bush administration and his rubber-stamp GOP Congress have lavished on the rich while undermining the safety net of the poor and elderly with their assault on the minimum wage, Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security.

This has been the most anti-union administration in memory and American workers are paying a severe price in downward mobility. The Department of Labor serves as a sounding board for corporate America, while Bush appointees to the National Labor Relations Board look the other way when employers fire union supporters in organizing drives. Without unions to represent them, fewer workers have pensions or health insurance.

There has been no Congressional oversight on intelligence failures, illegal wiretaps or war profiteering. (Last spring, Democrats in the Senate introduced a bill to create a bipartisan panel to investigate Halliburton and other contractors for scandalous taxpayer rip-offs. It failed when every Republican voted against it).

All that will change if Democrats regain control of Congress in the upcoming midterm elections.

GOP Incumbents Under Attack

There can be no doubt that GOP incumbents are hurting from their party's pandering to the wealthy and botching of issues and policies at home and abroad. In some states, attractive Republican candidates chose not to run this cycle because the political winds are against them.

In House races, Democrats are poised to gain 15 to 20 seats, giving them a majority. They are most optimistic about replacing GOP incumbents in the arc of states running from the Northeast across the Midwest.

In the Senate, where Democrats need a net gain of six seats to gain control, the most vulnerable Republican incumbents are trailing or barely holding in Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Ohio, Montana, Missouri, Tennessee and Virginia. At the same time, Democrats need to hold off strong GOP challenges in New Jersey, Maryland and Washington.

Get Out The Vote

The election, as everyone knows, is about turnout.

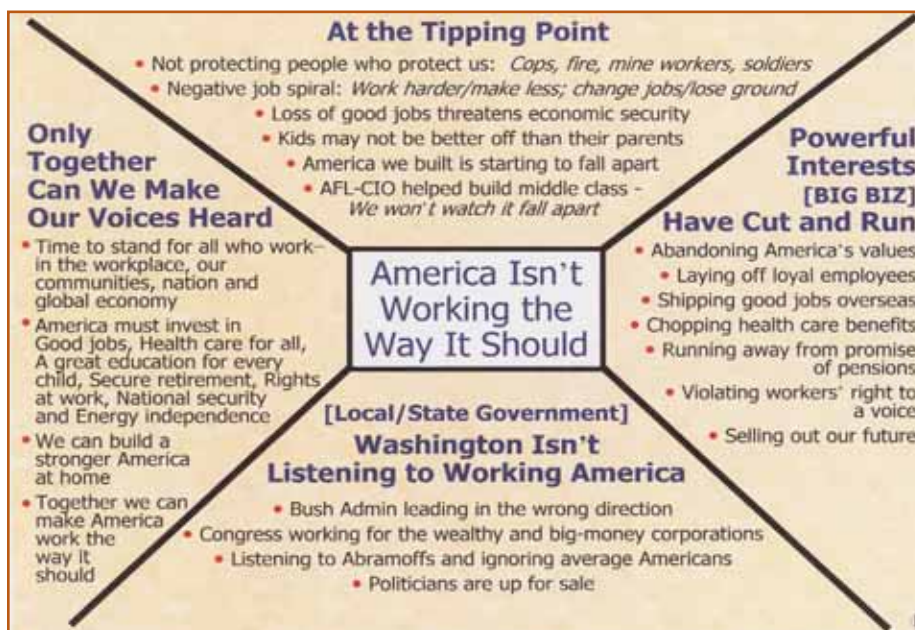
AFL-CIO President John Sweeney believes "a perfect storm is gathering to sweep away Republican control of the Congress. Economic trends have strained working families to the breaking point. Workers are not sharing in the wealth they helped create, and our nation's economic recovery has not been a recovery for workers at all." Sweeney revealed that the federation is spending \$40 million on member mobilization.

Republicans organized a massive turnout for the Bush reelection in 2004, but political expert Charlie Cook says they're "facing a motivation deficit" this time. Angry voters—that's Democrats, independents and the previously unaffiliated apathetic—go to the polls on election day. Disillusioned Republicans will likely stay home.

Southern Conservatives Fume and Stall, but Congress Renews Voting Rights Act

When the Voting Rights Act was up for renewal this year, most people assumed it would pass in a breeze. But while the Act is a treasured icon to most of the nation and enjoyed widespread bipartisan support, rancor still runs deep among many conservative lawmakers in the South.

Nearly 100 diehard House Republicans dug in their heels and tried to amend, delay or defeat it. In the end their efforts to weak-



ION COVERAGE

Democrats Regain Control of Congress

en federal protections of voting rights failed. In July, both houses voted overwhelmingly for renewal of the Act. President Bush signed into law a 25-year extension, one year in advance of the 2007 expiration date.

The National Voting Rights Act of 1965 transformed politics in the South.

The Act outlawed such racist voting practices as literacy tests and the poll tax. It provided for federal registration of voters. The bill also provided for Department of Justice oversight in registration, and required the Department's approval for any change in voting law in black districts.

How important is the Act to minority voters? Consider this: Before it was passed, there were only a handful of black elected officials in the South. Today there are several thousand.

It came as a shock to many that the legislative centerpiece of the civil rights movement still stirs such angry emotions in the halls of Congress. In their attempt to sandbag the Act, southern conservatives embarrassed the GOP, punching a gaping hole in the party's "big tent" concept.

Eliminating racial voter exclusions in the South was one of the most significant civil rights achievements, and it came about only after bitter, bloody struggles.

"I almost died and some of my colleagues gave their very lives!" Georgia Congressman John Lewis shouted from the House floor last summer as recalcitrant Republican lawmakers tried to water down or eliminate the Act. Lewis was beaten by Alabama state troopers in 1965 as he and other civil rights activists marched from Selma to Montgomery in support of voting rights.

The Selma to Montgomery marches culminated in federal intervention to prevent discrimination in voting. President Lyndon Johnson, in a dramatic joint session address, called upon Congress to enact a strong voting rights bill. In March 1965 he sent the Act to Congress where after rancorous debate, it passed both houses. Johnson signed it into law on August 6, 1965.

Lewis said that while progress has been made "the sad truth is, discrimination still exists. That's why we still need the Voting Rights Act and we must not go back to the dark past."

Union Protections and Affordable Health Care: Priorities of a Democratic-Controlled Congress

Motivating voters won't be a problem for workers and their unions. All they need to do is imagine Michigan's John Conyers as chairman of the House Judiciary Committee or Sen. Ted Kennedy chairing health and labor and they're ready to leaflet, march and pound on doors.

Just consider what a difference it will make for workers who want to join unions if the Employee Free Choice Act becomes law. This bill—even though it has 213 co-sponsors in the House and 42 in the Senate—has been bottled up by the Republican Congress since it would thwart the anti-union tactics of their corporate contributors.

The Employee Free Choice Act Would Do Three Things:

It would allow workers to form a union by the simple act of signing a card or a petition, and would eliminate opportunities for employer intimidation. The union is certified at 50 percent, plus one.

The second thing it would do is allow for triple-damage penalties on employers who fire workers for union activity, and for the first time would allow unions to go to federal court and get an injunction against an employer.

And the Act would do a third important thing—it would say the boss cannot run away from the union. If a contract cannot be negotiated within the first year of union certification, there would be arbitration and a contract would be imposed.

With Democrats in charge of the Senate, workers can be sure Chairman Ted Kennedy would order a full-court press on the Employee Free Choice Act.

Health Care For All

No issue is more troubling for working families than health insurance where premiums are rising five times faster than wages. Rep. John Conyers has the answer for that. His bill, HR 676, would institute a single-payer health care system in the United States by expanding a greatly improved Medicare system to every resident.

Conyers' bill would do away with the expensive middlemen in health care — the insurance companies — which is why it has been stifled in the GOP-controlled Congress that enjoys millions of dollars in health care industry campaign contributions.

HR 676 would cover every person in the U.S. for all necessary medical care including prescription drugs, hospital, surgical, outpatient services, primary and preventative care, emergency services, dental, mental health, home health, physical therapy, rehabilitation (including for substance abuse), vision care, chiropractic and long term care. HR 676 ends deductibles and co-payments.

HR 676 would save billions annually by eliminating the high overhead and profits of the private health insurance industry and HMOs.

Conyers has 75 congressional co-sponsors for HR 676 and it has been endorsed by nearly 200 union organizations, including scores of Central Labor Councils and many state AFL-CIOs.

Protection for workers seeking unions, and affordable health care for all, depends on the outcome of the midterm elections. There's also the matter of saving Social Security from a Bush administration that wants to privatize it. Is that motivation enough?

Rocky Mountain Retreat Ignites Labor Spirit for Two Members of Local 251

Two representatives of OPEIU Local 251 went to Colorado Springs this summer for an enlightening few days of discussion and activities designed to strengthen and educate unions and their members.

In July, Albuquerque Local 251 Vice President Amy Cogswell and Trustee Kelley Burns attended the 50th annual Grace Carroll Rocky Mountain Labor School. The school is for union members from around the region and taught by labor professionals who volunteer their time for this great cause.

Cogswell and Burns said they were impressed by the quality of the courses, including a class in labor history they say gave them a deep appreciation of the past sacrifices made by union workers that led to today's improved working conditions. There were also classes in collective bargaining, labor leadership, steward training, as well as grievance and arbitration.

The week was also filled with activities. An evening of song turned into a spontaneous sing-a-long when everyone joined in singing old union and civil rights songs with the most popular being "Sixteen Tons." Another evening activity was a showing of the film, "The Wobblies," about the

Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). This film documented the extraordinary trials and tribulations of the early labor movement organizers in the early 1900s.

Cogswell and Burns said one of the valuable and enriching lessons of the school was getting to know their brothers and sisters in the labor movement since they were encouraged to meet as many people as possible to share experiences, ideas and information.

Members of the Board of Control of the Grace Carroll Rocky Mountain Labor

School are congratulated for their successful efforts and tireless work that contributed to this year's labor school being a wonderful learning experience. Special thanks go to the school's Coordinator, George E. "Jeep" Gilliland, for his tireless efforts. His hard work and devotion to the labor movement was a huge contribution to the success of the school, the devotion of the board and instructors to the school and the students, and the wonderful union spirit that our brothers and sisters in the labor movement showed each other.



New Mexico attendees to the 50th annual Grace Carroll Rocky Mountain Labor School, held in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Supermarket Workers to Receive Record-Breaking Settlement

Ralphs Grocery Company has admitted to their employees that they violated the law during the 2003-04 lockout and have reached a record-shattering settlement. The settlement, which will be contingent on court approval as well as the withdrawal of the union's case pending before the National Labor Relations Board, will end the federal government's case against the company for conspiracy, identity fraud, money laundering and obstruction of justice.

Southern California Ralph employees represented by the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) who were locked out on October 11, 2003, along with their trust funds and local unions, will receive a settlement of \$50 million, the largest such settlement in United State's history. The company will also pay \$20 million in fines to the federal government.

Congratulations to our union sisters and brothers in California!

Pope Says Working Too Hard is Never Good

In the middle of his summer break, Pope Benedict XVI said working too hard is never a good thing – not even for a pope.

Speaking at a noon blessing at his summer residence outside Rome Aug. 20, the pope reflected on the 12th-century writings of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who warned against "the dangers of excessive activity, whatever the condition or office held, because many occupations lead to a 'hardening of the heart' and suffering of the spirit.

"This warning is valid for every kind of occupation, even those involving the governance of the church," the pope said.

This is a great reminder of another benefit of union membership – paid vacation time!

Local 30 Welcomes Local 56

After 40 years of representing the clerical/administrative employees working in the trade union offices in Phoenix, Arizona, Local 56 has come to a crossroads. As happens with many small, independent local unions, Local 56 found it impossible to keep up with the demands and expenses of professional representation and sought to merge with a sister OPEIU local.

Effective July 1, after much discussion and a great deal of care, Local 56 merged with Local 30.

"We have long admired the way Local 30 takes care of its business and always puts its members first," Local 56 President Linda Vedo said. "This is the way we have always tried to conduct ourselves and so when it came time to consider the future of our great union, the choice for us was clear."

"There was a time when small local unions of fewer than 100 workers could often take care of their own needs," Local 30 Executive Director Walter Allen said. "These days the needs of workers are very different and the expertise needed to bargain good contracts and defend workers has changed. Every union membership needs sound, professional representation to adequately protect its interests."

"When we first met these officers and members I remember feeling the pride they felt in their union," Local 30 President Marianne Giordano reported. "They had to

go it alone for so long, but now realized they just couldn't do it anymore and they needed help. They flatter us by asking to become a part of our organization because of our reputation for solid leadership and good representation."

Local 56 had been bargaining small local agreements on behalf of their 100 members, handling grievances and arbitrations, and dealing with the day-to-day needs of the membership. The officers and stewards had been used to providing all service and benefits, but as a result of changes in the laws, the level of difficulty in modern contract negotiations and ever increasing government regulation, they realized they could

no longer provide the representation their members needed. Thus, Local 30, with its staff of professional business agents, will provide the training and education their stewards need, as well as the representation that union members require.

"When you see the kind of commitment these sisters and brothers have toward the labor movement you remember why you work so hard for your union," Local 30 Vice President Cathy Young commented. "This is what a union is all about: Taking care to protect one another. These members will now receive the same great care Local 30 members get every day and I know how much that means to them."



Officers of the newly merged Local 56 and Local 30.

OPEIU Scores Victory for Local 179 President

Local 179 President Bill Earp is back on the job with a big thanks to OPEIU. Earp has been reinstated to his job as a driver for Coca Cola in Chattanooga, Tennessee after an arbitrator ruled he was wrongfully dismissed. The great news is that the ruling made him whole by awarding him the full back pay, seniority and benefits he rightfully deserved.

Earp says he is happy about the ruling and adds that Local 179 and the International "were very good to me."

After the wrongful dismissal, the OPEIU Executive Board came to Earp's aid and voted to take the case to arbitration.

Earp says that International Representative

Faye Orr did an excellent job in the arbitration, as well as Local 2001 President and International Vice President Phillip Pope, whom Earp says "ran down some vital information" that helped win the case in arbitration by proving the company did not follow

the rules stated in the contract.

He also has some advice for anyone who may wind up in his shoes. "Be sure and have all of the answers to the questions that may or may not come up during the arbitration, and have them ready in your mind."

For more information
about the OPEIU,
visit our website at
www.opeiu.org



WASHINGTON WINDOW

The Do-Nothing Congress

Even by recent standards, the Republican-run 109th Congress set some sort of dubious record for inaction. Remember this, now that they're campaigning.

The GOP-run Congress that Harry S. Truman blasted as "do-nothing" back in 1948 was productive by comparison. That 1947-48 Congress passed more than 1,000 pieces of legislation, including some that were positive, such as the Marshall Plan.

Of course, that "Do-Nothing Congress" also gave us the anti-worker Taft-Hartley Act.

Which brings up a key point about this GOP-run Congress, whose legislative output is approximately one-third of that one: Maybe, as far as workers are concerned, no action is better than the wrong action.

Because when this "Do-Nothing Congress" actually bestirs itself to do something, it usually does the wrong thing. Consider some of the few measures that either the House or the Senate, and occasionally both, approved in the last year and a half:

- The law implementing the job-losing Central American Free Trade

Agreement. Congress also passed implementing legislation for the free trade agreement with Oman, a nation that has no labor protection laws whatsoever. The Senate vote on Oman was 63-31. Neither the Omani pact nor CAFTA have enforceable labor rights provisions.

- Extension of the USA Patriot Act, which trashes the Bill of Rights.

- The punitive, vindictive and—let's call it what it is—racist House version of the Immigration bill, not only would turn immigrants and Hispanics into felons, but it would also turn union organizers, teachers, religious workers and others who help immigrants into criminals, too. Can you imagine being thrown in jail for giving an immigrant a drink of water?

- The Senate version of the immigrant rights legislation is better, but not by much. It sets up a path to "green cards"—permanent residence—for some, but not all, of the 11 to 12 million undocumented workers in the U.S.

The path is long and tortuous, taking years and involving thousands of dollars in fines imposed upon some of the poorest, most-exploited workers in the nation. It is hard to imagine how many

of the undocumented would actually try to walk that path. But at least the Senate bill brings undocumented workers under U.S. labor laws.

- Blind obedience to GOP President George W. Bush's war in Iraq. The Republicans have been marching in lockstep with the White House, at least until the campaign began. The Democrats are scared of their own shadows. They fail to criticize the decision to go to war—which many voted for—and the corruption, fraud and mismanagement of it by Bush, his corporate cronies and his Right Wing ideologues.

- A Congress that is a cesspool of scandal, and not just in the obvious cases of Reps. Bob Ney (R-Ohio), Randy Cunningham (R-Calif.) and William Jefferson (D-La.), all in jail or headed for it. The whole campaign contribution system is a scam featuring rampant influence-peddling. It gives to the plutocrats and their allies, who have money, access and clout. And it gives the back of its hand to workers and their families. Congress' response to being for sale? Minor changes in some small ethics rules.

Just remember all this when you go to the polls to vote on November 7.

Justice in the Enron Case?

Two unexpected endings have closed another chapter in the fall of Enron.

Enron's former Chief Financial Officer Andrew Fastow has been sentenced to just six years in federal prison for his role in the company's implosion. He was originally indicted on 98 counts, including fraud,

insider trading and money laundering, but cooperated with prosecutors and was convicted on only two counts of conspiracy.

Fastow had agreed to serve a 10-year prison term, but a judge in Houston cut the sentence nearly in half saying, "Prosecution is necessary, but persecution was not." The head of a group of former Enron employees says it was

a slap in the face to those who lost so much.

One of the two top Enron executives that Fastow testified against, company founder Kenneth Lay, died of heart disease in July 5, 2006 while vacationing in Colorado. The other, Enron's former CEO Jeffrey Skilling, will be sentenced on conspiracy and fraud charges in October.

Work and Health

You and Your Salt

Submitted by Jeffrey S. Freed, M.D.

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

The American Medical Association has joined the many health groups in the country advocating a decrease in the amount of salt used by individuals. This has the intention of reducing the occurrence of heart, brain and vascular diseases.

The AMA suggested that we all reduce the amount of salt we use by 50 percent during the next 10 years by simply taking the saltshaker out the kitchen and dining room tables. They also recommend that industry remove all the salt from processed foods and restaurants start cooking without salt.

The intention is to ask the Food and Drug Administration to remove salt from the list of foods and substances generally

considered safe (GRAS list). This would allow the FDA to monitor the amount of salt in processed food products. If salt was removed from the GRAS list, food processors would be required to petition the FDA if they wanted to add salt to a food product. The FDA is being asked to require all food labeling to be simplified, in order that the salt content be more obvious.

The goal is to help the nation achieve the public health goal of having 65 percent of the population consuming the recommended levels of salt by the year 2010. Currently only 21 percent of Americans are consuming recommended levels of sodium.

Salt is a major cause of high blood pres-

sure, which is the major risk factor in heart attacks, stroke, kidney failure, and heart failure.

“Hidden salt” is a particular problem for patients battling high blood pressure. Heavy salt loads that exist in meals like Texas barbecue are particularly dangerous.

At the end of the day it is necessary for each person to know how much salt they are taking in by being aware of the salt content of the foods they are eating. **Your health is your responsibility.**

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

Major Rulings of the 2005-6 Supreme Court Term

It's important to know how our Supreme Court Justices voted on a number of key decisions this year. In many of the cases that split the justices narrowly this year, Justice Anthony M. Kennedy emerged at the center. Justices who voted with the majority are denoted in bold.

Employees' Rights

Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railway Company v. White – Enhanced legal protection against retaliation for complaining about discrimination or harassment on the job. **Stevens, Souter, Breyer, Ginsburg, Kennedy, Roberts, Scalia, Alito, Thomas.**

Garcetti v. Ceballos – The Constitution does not protect statements made by a public employee “in the course of doing his or her job.” **Stevens, Souter, Breyer, Ginsburg, Kennedy, Roberts, Scalia, Alito, Thomas.**

Presidential Power

Rumsfeld v. Hamdan – Military commissions to try

Guantánamo detainees violated federal statute and international law. **Stevens, Souter, Breyer, Ginsburg, Kennedy, Roberts took no part,** Scalia, Alito, Thomas.

Right to Counsel

United States v. Gonzalez-Lopez – A defendant who has been wrongly deprived of the right to hire a lawyer of his choice can have his conviction overturned. **Stevens, Souter, Breyer, Ginsburg, Kennedy, Roberts, Scalia, Alito, Thomas.**

Redistricting

League of United Latin American Citizens v. Perry – Republican-driven mid-decade redistricting of the Texas Congressional map was not an impermissible gerrymander. **Stevens, Souter gave no view, Breyer, Ginsburg gave no view, Kennedy, Roberts, Scalia, Alito, Thomas.**

The Texas Legislature violated the Voting Rights Act in dismantling a district with a Latino majority. **Stevens, Souter, Breyer, Ginsburg, Kennedy, Roberts, Scalia, Alito, Thomas.**

Apply Now for OPEIU Scholarships!

It's time again for all members, associate members and their dependents to apply for OPEIU scholarships! Applications are now available for the John Kelly Labor Studies Scholarship Fund, the Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship Fund and the Romeo Corbeil/Gilles Beauregard Scholarship Fund. The application deadline is March 31, 2007, so don't delay!

Applications can be obtained by visiting OPEIU's website, www.opeiu.org or by returning this coupon to: Nancy Wohlforth, Secretary-Treasurer, OPEIU Scholarship Applications, 1660 L Street, NW, Suite 801, Washington, DC 20036, or **via fax at (202) 347-0649**. For more information about the scholarships, please visit our website at www.opeiu.org.

Name of Member _____ Local Union No. _____

Home Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Email _____

Fax _____ Phone (H) _____ (W) _____

Please send me the following applications:

- John Kelly Labor Studies Scholarship Fund
- Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship Fund
- Romeo Corbeil/Gilles Beauregard Scholarship Fund

2006 Ingham County Union Family Fair Day A Success

For the past ten years, Local 459 members have enjoyed a day at the Ingham County Union Family Fair in Michigan along with other union members from around the area and 2006 was no exception. Local 459 offered reduced entrance and ride tickets to its members and its Executive Board approved giving a free ticket to any steward in the area. The union sold 200 entrance tickets.

The Fair Day is sponsored by the Greater Lansing Labor Council and other unions. A total of 1,500 entry tickets were sold. A portion of the entrance fees is retained by the Labor Council, who reinvests it in the Fair by sponsoring a petting zoo.



Local 459 members enjoy the Ingham County Union Family Fair Day.

Cost of Living Increases

The International Union has prepared the following chart that highlights the cost of living figures for urban wage earners and clerical workers, as published monthly by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov) based on 1982-84=100.

As the chart indicates, the cost of living for urban wage earners and clerical workers has increased 3.9 percent over the twelve month period, August 2005 to August 2006.

Consumer Price Index (COLA) Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers U.S. City Average — All Items

Year	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.
2005	195.0	195.2	193.4	192.5								
2006					194.0	194.2	195.3	197.2	198.2	198.6	199.2	199.6
2004	185.4	186.5	186.8	186.0								
2005					186.3	187.3	188.6	190.2	190.0	190.1	191.0	192.1
Annual Point Change	9.6	8.7	6.6	6.5	7.7	6.9	6.7	7.0	8.2	8.5	8.2	7.5
Annual Percent Change	5.2%	4.7%	3.5%	3.5%	4.1%	3.7%	3.6%	3.7%	4.3%	4.5%	4.3%	3.9%

The Consumer Price Index (COLA) is issued by the U.S. Department of Labor on the second or third Wednesday every month.

Why We Labor

By John Clifton Davis, Montclair, New Jersey

As read at the New Jersey Labor Day Parade, September 3, 2006

We labor for love,
 love of family,
 love of country,
 and because we love to use our God-given hands
 which were made for labor,
 and because it gives us self-esteem and satisfaction
 from seeing the results and accomplishments of our labor,
 and because through labor we acquire the financial security
 that keeps the wolf from our doors,
 puts food on our tables,
 and enables us and our children and our children's children
 to make something of ourselves.
 It is true that now times are tough for Labor,
 but when we consider
 the ever-flowing incoming source of labor,
 our immigrants, past and present,
 who have played a vital role in making our melting pot,
 America,
 the grand country that it is,
 and because there is a powerful voice that cannot be
 ignored,
 and because altogether we have always dared to speak up
 for what is rightfully ours,
 we know in our hearts, minds and spirit
 that destiny is on our side,
 as we all move forward
 to the better times that lie ahead!



Top photo, Local 153 and Local 32 members participate in the New Jersey Labor Day Parade, American Labor Museum/Botto House National Landmark. Bottom photo, President Michael Goodwin leads the locals in the parade.

Hollywood Production Professionals Turn to OPEIU for the Benefits They Deserve

Local 174 in Los Angeles has started an authorization drive for Line Producers, Production Supervisors and Assistant Production Supervisors who work on many of the commercials you see on television. It is hard to believe these positions are the only members of a film crew who currently do not receive benefits, overtime or holiday time off. It's also estimated that nearly a quarter of these professionals have no health insurance.

A number of these talented people formed a group called CoProS, which approached OPEIU when they realized they needed the type of quality support only OPEIU can provide.

OPEIU and CoProS recently held a rally in Los Angeles to gain support and attention for the authorization effort. The rally was held at an event for the Association of Independent Commercial Producers (AICP), the organization whose member companies hire the freelance production personnel.

OPEIU Local 174 Organizer Lupe Salazar said, "I was very happy with the turnout at the rally. These workers work an average of 14-16 hour days, so the effort they made to get out to a rally showed me they are determined to be recognized."

"Organizing this group has been difficult, but OPEIU can bring these workers the representation they deserve while allowing them to continue their high level work without any conflict," Salazar continued.

The movement to organize began on the Internet. CoProS started as a Yahoo group, primarily as an information resource guide, but after realizing that all the other workers on the set receive overtime and benefits, they realized they were not going to get any of these benefits without organizing.

OPEIU is committed to help. Salazar says, "Our next step is to bypass the AICP and begin approaching each production company to sign an agreement. We feel the production companies

may be more open to signing individual agreements the first time around. We will mobilize the group to begin withholding services from those entities that don't sign."



Hollywood production personnel show their support for the OPEIU authorization effort.

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