



# WHITE COLLAR

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

No. 490



Issue 2, Spring 2005

## Helicopter Pilots Win Top Wages of \$100k

After nearly two years and more than seventy negotiation sessions yielded limited progress, the National Mediation Board (NMB) imposed a thirty-day “cooling off” period between OPEIU Local 107 and Air Logistics Inc. At the conclusion of that time period, either party could have acted against the other with a strike or lockout. Minutes before a telephone conference with a federal judge, and shortly before the “cooling off” period ended at midnight on March 10th, a tentative contract agreement was reached that raised wages 15-45 percent based on skills and years of service, reinstated six wrongfully terminated employees, and forced the company to freeze the cost of medical and healthcare services for at least two years. Retroactive increases to May 19, 2003 average more than 21 percent.

The new agreement brings the top wage for the most skilled pilot with 29 years of

service to \$100,000 per year!

“After two years of intense and sometimes adversarial negotiations, we have once again led our industry to new and higher

levels in salaries and benefits,” Local 107 President Ken Bruner said. “We could never have accomplished this without the aid and

*(Continued on page 5)*



Local 107 helicopter pilots listen intently to reports from their leadership on the status of negotiations.

## CUNA Mutual Group Commits More Than 20 Labor Law Violations

During the year-long contract dispute, the management of CUNA Mutual Group (CMG) based in Madison, Wisconsin has resorted to a blatant anti-union campaign against OPEIU Local 39. The union represents 1,381 CMG

employees. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) intervened to force CMG to cease and desist their tactics, which were unsuccessful in forcing Local 39 to acquiesce to the company’s unwavering and unreasonable demands.

The day of reckoning for CMG came on December 15 as the NLRB determined that the company had committed more than 20 violations of labor law. In order to avoid a trial, CMG voluntarily agreed on January

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## Editorial



### What's So Wrong with Social Security?

By Michael Goodwin, International President

This edition of *White Collar* contains much discussion about the Bush administration's plan to privatize Social Security. I will supplement this discussion with my views on "what's so wrong with Social Security?"

On December 16, 2004, President Bush made a rather disturbing remark about Social Security. He said the program is in "crisis ... now." Curiously, he chose to create the impression that our nation's proven retirement income insurance program, Social Security, is in some imminent danger. However, nothing could be further from the truth!

For example, according to the nonpartisan, U.S. government's Congressional Budget Office (CBO), if no changes whatsoever are made to the existing Social Security program, 100 percent of all benefits will be paid to all Social Security retirees through 2052. Further, the CBO states that, starting in 2053, 80 percent of benefits will still be paid, dropping off to 71 percent by 2100! Again, this would only be the case if NO CHANGES ARE MADE to the current Social Security program! Even the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Trustees, who were all appointed by President Bush, predict that the so-called "crisis" in Social Security will begin no earlier than 2042!

Notwithstanding these predictions, there are still some people who claim that Social Security will be "bankrupt" in 2018. That allegation is totally false. That's like saying people who have worked all of their lives, and who will retire soon with no more wages coming in, are "bankrupt"—even though they have millions of dollars of U.S. Treasury notes in each of their names! The fact is Social Security is projected to have approximately \$3.5 trillion in reserves available to supplement payroll tax revenue, according to the Social Security Administration Trustees' own report. Those reserves will continue to grow, reaching a peak of \$6.6 trillion in 2027. In fact, Social Security will not be "bankrupt" in 2042 or 2052. This is because payroll taxes will still be coming in to the trust fund to finance benefits.

Still, critics of Social Security continue to point out that Social Security's promises of retirement benefits are just that, promises. As a recent *The New York Times* editorial so aptly expressed, however: "... since 1983, payroll taxes have exceeded benefits, with the excess tax revenue invested in interest-bearing U.S. Treasury securities ... thus, accumulated interest and the securities themselves make up the Social Security trust fund. If we are to believe the farce that the trust fund's Treasury securities are

worthless, someone better tell investors throughout the world, who currently hold \$4.3 trillion in Treasury debt that carries the exact same government obligations to pay as the trust fund securities. The president is irresponsible to even imply that the United States might not honor its debt obligations."

When the Roosevelt administration established America's Social Security Program in 1935, it had two purposes: First, to rescue the more than half of America's seniors who were living in poverty; and second, to provide an insurance policy for America's workers to make sure that they and their families would have retirement benefits to keep them out of poverty when they retired. The first goal was met and the second goal continues to be met. In addition, since 1935, Congress has added additional benefits to the program, such as the equivalent of hundreds of thousands of dollars of disability insurance for each worker, as much as \$400,000 in life insurance policies for surviving minors and spouses, as well as annual cost-of-living increases for retirees.

Since the very start of the program, the U.S. government has met 100 percent of its Social Security obligations, without fail,



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through wars, recessions, national tragedies and stock market downturns. On this basis alone, Social Security is certainly one of America's most successful, proven, and reliable programs ever.

Of course, confronting future problems sooner rather than later is always a good idea. But words such as "crisis" should be reserved for real impending catastrophes — not those imagined or artificially created. And the word "now" should also refer to problems that we face today or expect to face in the very near future.

When President Bush finally provides us with the full details of his plan to "save" Social Security, we can judge it better. At that time, we will all be able to evaluate his ideas and, if we disagree, provide alternative solutions. We do face challenges, but there is nothing that would justify weakening Social Security and cutting all future retirees' benefits. We should, instead, strengthen the existing Social Security system — the most successful and reliable anti-poverty program in the history of our nation.

Obviously, you can help by contacting your congressional representatives, and let them know your views on Social Security. I would appreciate a copy of any correspondence that you send to your representative on this issue. Thank you.

## FCT Wins a Contract with Archdiocese of New York!

After nearly a year of negotiations, the Federation of Catholic Teachers (FCT), a subdivision of OPEIU, Local 153, reached an agreement in March with the Archdiocese of New York that includes a 12 percent wage increase, a fairer healthcare plan, pay parity between elementary and high school teachers, and much more. The union, which represents 3,200 Catholic school teachers, staged several sick-outs throughout the year to put pressure on the Archdiocese, including one just weeks prior to reaching an agreement.

"Our actions proved effective, and we're pleased with the three-year agreement," FCT President Mary-Ann Perry said. The contract, retroactive to September 2004, calls for wage

hikes of 4 percent the first year, and 3 percent and 5 percent the following years.

"The Archdiocese had offered a one-year contract with just a 3 percent pay hike," Perry said. "Particularly considering where we started, we made tremendous progress and our members are going to be very happy with this contract."

The contract also raises the maximum salary that pensions can be based on from \$45,000 to \$50,000.

The new contract affects 216 elementary schools and 15 high schools in Manhattan, Staten Island, the Bronx and several suburban counties operated by the Association of Catholic Schools, which is run by the Archdiocese.



**Federation of Catholic Teachers President Mary-Ann Perry signs the three-year agreement with the Archdiocese of New York, assisted by FCT legal counsel, William Russo.**

## Workers' Rights Being Trampled By Employer

**By Region VII Vice President  
Aaron B. Sanders**

The working men and women of this country are now seeing their personal rights and freedoms being eroded by employer policies and procedures that dictate how individuals live their lives away from the workplace. In days past one could turn to their union, attorney, or elected officials for help on the job site to combat workplace policies and procedures that infringed on individual rights, but those days are far behind us.

The Bush administration has, over the past 4.5 years, launched an all out assault on labor

while at the same time allowing employers to wield heavy-handed policies that restrict workers' rights while on and off the clock. The latest example of this uncontrolled power of employers is the case of Weyco, Inc.

Weyco is a small company in Okemos, Michigan that employs about 200 people, which established a company policy that employees must maintain a tobacco and smoke free status at all times. The policy prohibits:

- ...smoking or otherwise using tobacco products on Company time or property.

This, in itself, may or may not be completely improper, as the employer does have certain rights as to the working conditions they

feel are appropriate while an employee is on the clock; but in reading further in the policy the company jumps from employer to dictator as the next section of the policy reads:

- Further, effective January 1, 2005, WEYCO, INC. will be a smoke free company and all employees must maintain a smoke free and tobacco free status at all times.

This may be hard for anyone to believe but it is true. I have obtained a copy of the company's policy and I will point out the scariest prohibitions:

- ...smoking or otherwise using tobacco at any time.

*(Continued on page 16)*

## CUNA Mutual Group Commits More Than 20 Labor Law Violations

*(Continued from page 1)*

14 to provide the relief sought by the NLRB. The process concluded with the NLRB's approval of the settlement agreement on January 25, which was also signed by Local 39. As a result, CMG was required to post the terms of the agreement by February 28 — a deadline that they met with three days to spare.

"It's rare these days to win so many unfair labor practice (ULP) charges, especially under the Bush administration," Local 39 Business Manager John Peterson said. "With the intensity of our corporate campaign against CMG, along with the success of the union's win at the NLRB, we hope to see CMG change its ways."

The violations committed by CMG included bargaining in bad faith, threatening employees with lockouts and layoffs in retaliation for the union's corporate campaign, outsourcing work, providing improper assistance to a group of professional employees seeking a separate bargaining unit, and disciplining and harassing employees in retaliation for their union activities. The NLRB dealt CMG another setback when their charge against Local 39 for bargaining in bad faith was dismissed.

Local 39's efforts to get CMG to drop

their demands since their 'last, best, final offer' back on March 20, 2004 have so far been fruitless. "Since that date, CMG has refused to budge at numerous bargaining sessions," Peterson said.

CMG has reported record profits of \$112 million in 2003 and \$122 million in 2004. Yet, the company continues to demand concessions from employees in hours of work,

health insurance, pension and wages. Additionally, CMG proposes that Local 39 relinquish its right to negotiate changes in wages, health insurance, and outsourcing.

Despite this history, the new CEO of the company, Jeff Post, has engaged new legal counsel to assist in bargaining. The union remains hopeful that this change will lead to a contract.



Picketing are James Barr, Carey Karabis, Shirley Noles, Laura Lowrey, Sandy Georgeson and Ken Peterson.



Local 39 employees picket CUNA Mutual Group. Pictured are Jean Hazeltt and Claudia Alcorta.



Local 39 presents CUNA Mutual Group's new CEO, Jeff Post, with a holiday basket filled with messages that express the employees' concerns such as, "Contract Now," and "A fair union contract is an important step toward ensuring CMG's future success!" Pictured is Negotiating Steward Laura Lowrey.

## Helicopter Pilots Achieve Top Wage of \$100k

*(Continued from page 1)*

support of the OPEIU. At every turn in this arduous process President Michael Goodwin, Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin Kistler, attorney Jim Hicks and International Representative Paul Bohelski, were there for us with unlimited support. We are very fortunate to be associated with such an organization as the OPEIU. I hope we can somehow, someday, demonstrate our gratitude," Bruner said.

Local 107 and Air Logistics had previously agreed on how to deal with layoffs, seniority, job posting, bereavement leave, jury duty, training, severance pay, overtime, grievance procedure, travel pay, accident prevention, retirement and the 401(k) plan. Unfortunately, the stumbling blocks had been getting agreement on critical issues such as wages and health insurance.

Matters were not helped by the illegal activities that the company engaged in such as bargaining in bad faith, firing six pilots for participating in a demonstration, bypassing union representatives to deal directly with the membership, withdrawing proposals moments after submitting them, collecting confidential information, and the unilateral implementation of a new sick leave policy during negotiations. In December

2004, the union membership voted overwhelmingly to reject the company's "best and final offer."

It was at this point that the NMB ordered a "cooling off" period, which began on February 8. Air Logistics told its investors that 90 percent of the contract settlements occur during these "cooling off" periods, but seemed reluctant to engage in any serious negotiations. Once again, the NMB — with the deadline fast approaching — stepped in by inviting the parties to engage in "super mediation" sessions at its Washington, D.C. office. Finally, Air

Logistics relented on their bargaining stance and an agreement was reached.

"We have something we feel we can recommend to the membership," Bohelski said. "It's a big step in bringing pilots' wages up to where they should be, considering the skillful work they do. The new contract will make the pilots the highest paid pilots in the Gulf of Mexico and Alaska."

Air Logistics is a subsidiary of Offshore Logistics, the world's largest provider of helicopter transportation services to the oil and gas industry.



**Pictured from left to right are OPEIU Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin Kistler; Local 107 President Ken Bruner; AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka; OPEIU International Representative Paul Bohelski; and Bargaining Committee members Pete Catalano and Don Robson. The photo was taken in Trumka's office just moments after reaching a tentative agreement with Air Logistics.**

## New Contract in Naples

OPEIU has signed its first contract with the city of Naples, Florida, reported Local 100 President Richard Ellis. The newly formed chapter — representing professionals with supervisory responsibilities — voted unanimously to ratify the contract on January 28. The Naples City Council also voted unanimously to approve the contract on February 16. The two-year contract provides for wage increases, protections for all bargaining unit members, and an internal grievance process, among many other issues.

Planning Tech Molly Reed, who played a leading role in organizing to create an OPEIU chapter and in negotiating the contract, said, "With OPEIU's assistance, it was totally worth the effort to organize. We were able to negotiate a contract that we would have never won on our own. Our dignity and respect have been restored."

OPEIU is also pursuing another city contract, but the Public Employee Relations Commission has yet to schedule an election for these employees. Once that happens, another newly formed chapter — the non-supervisory professionals — will have an opportunity to ratify a contract for the city council to approve.

These developments can be traced back to a controversial decision made by the Naples City Manager Robert Lee in August of 2003. The city's pension funds were running a deficit of nearly \$1 million. Instead of the city making up the shortfall as is the customary practice, Lee put the onus on the employees. He claimed there was a city ordinance that mandates that the city workers first contribute money to close the gap, and then the city would fill the remaining imbalance.

"Although the city manager met with us to discuss the issue, employee suggestions were

promptly dismissed on the grounds that the City Council would only agree to double our contribution to the pension fund," Reed said. "This, along with other troublesome policies issued from city hall, galvanized workers — especially the nearly 200 white collar employees who were labeled 'non-bargaining.' At that point, we had no leverage."

As a result, Reed and her colleagues began a process of forming a union, which could better represent their needs. They compiled telephone numbers, mailing addresses and most importantly, e-mail addresses, to communicate back and forth with all the prospective members. OPEIU was deemed to be the perfect fit. Although obstacles were erected along the way by the city's reliance on stalling tactics, OPEIU continually provided support and guidance, which led to the successful conclusion of an ordeal that was triggered by a power play by the city manager.

## OPEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania Honored for Labor-Management Cooperation

OPEIU Healthcare Local 112 in Pennsylvania was one of the recipients of the state's 2004 Governor's Award for Labor-Management Cooperation. This prestigious award is given to organizations that demonstrate exceptional, positive and productive labor-management relations. OPEIU Healthcare received the award for its efforts to reach a Temporary Transfer Agreement between two hospitals among three AFL-CIO unions — OPEIU Healthcare, AFSCME Local 2330 and SEIU District 1199-P. OPEIU Healthcare took the lead position for the three unions in drafting the initial proposal that became the working blueprint for the final agreement.

"OPEIU Healthcare Local 112 has demonstrated such an initiative and the ability to increase communication between employees and management and encourage unity in the workplace," said Governor Edward G. Rendell in a letter to the Local. Also honored were the Greater Hazelton Health Alliance, SEIU District 1199-P, and AFSCME District Council 87.

"The outstanding efforts made by the Greater Hazelton Health Alliance, SEIU, AFSCME and OPEIU have led to a safer work environment, more open lines of communication between labor and management, decreased grievances, and increased productivity. These improvements have made the Alliance more competitive and profitable while showcasing the importance of maintaining strong labor-management relations and providing great hope for the future of the health care industry in Pennsylvania," Gov. Rendell continued.

### **Bonnie Goshen Receives 2005 E. Dean Lovett Award**

Bonnie Goshen, MSN, RN-C, CRNP, a registered nurses' supervisor at Millersville University Health Center, has been selected as a recipient of the 2005 E. Dean Lovett Award. The American College Health Association's Awards Committee and Board of Directors will present Goshen with this prestigious award at their annual meeting in San Diego on June 2. The Lovett Award recognizes members who have directed a

college health service program or have contributed significantly to the development of a college health service program in an exemplary manner.

Goshen has been a bargaining unit member for more than 20 years and has served in the past as a member of the Board of

Directors of Local 112 and currently serves as president of the Local representing the State System of Higher Education registered nurses at the various campuses throughout Pennsylvania. Goshen is a member of the negotiating team for the Local and serves on numerous labor-management task forces.

### Senator Kennedy Pledges Support to Podiatrists

On February 9, 2005 we met with Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) to enlist his support for legislation critical to podiatrists. Senator Kennedy agreed to co-sponsor a bill (S. 440) that would guarantee access to quality foot and ankle care for Medicaid patients throughout the nation. Bill S. 440 amends the definition of "physician" in the Medicaid statute (Title XIX) to include podiatric physicians, aligning Medicaid with Medicare, which has always defined podiatrists as physicians.



**Peter C. Paicos Jr., D.P.M., president of the Massachusetts Podiatric Medical Society (MPMS), and APMA President Dr. Lloyd Smith.**



**Pictured are Dr. Lloyd Smith, president of the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA); OPEIU Vice President John Mattiacci, D.P.M.; Senator Kennedy; and OPEIU Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin Kistler.**

# OPEIU Mounts Campaign against Social Security Privatization Scheme

Source: [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org)

**A** battle is underway for the future of Social Security and whether it will remain a guaranteed benefit for all Americans. On one side of the fight is President Bush, his Congressional allies and business-friendly organizations claiming a Social Security crisis that can only be fixed by carving out private accounts from the system. On the other side are AFL-CIO unions, such as OPEIU, and worker-friendly organizations like the Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) who are determined to strengthen, not dismantle Social Security.

## Social Security: A Background

Social Security is one of the most effective government-run programs in the history of the world. It protects families when a worker retires, becomes disabled or dies. Even though many union members – unlike other workers – have good pensions and other benefits, Social Security is still important to them and their families.

Social Security provides important family protections that aren't available elsewhere. Social Security pays increased benefits to meet the needs of families. In particular, a worker's spouse and children

are eligible for valuable dependent benefits when a worker retires or becomes disabled and survivors' benefits when a worker dies. And unlike many privately negotiated benefits, these protections follow workers and their families from job to job.

The average pension isn't enough to fully fund retirement. Most pension plans are built around Social Security as a secure starting point. Maintaining a decent standard of living during retirement generally requires Social Security and personal savings, in addition to a pension.

Social Security protects retirees against rising costs. Social Security adjusts benefits every year to account for increases in the cost of living. Very few pension plans provide this guarantee. And Social Security benefits don't run out.

## Individual Accounts are the Wrong Solution

Social Security must change in the future, but the wrong kind of change – such as substituting individual accounts for Social Security's guaranteed benefits and simultaneously raising retirement ages – could threaten union members' pension benefits. Most negotiated pensions build on the foundation of Social Security. If Social Security wasn't there, or if its benefits were cut, negotiated pensions would not automatically make up the difference – which means most union retirees could suffer big drops in retirement income. The need to raise negotiated pension benefits to make up for the loss or reduction of Social Security would place a heavy burden on collective bargaining, leaving little if any opportunity to negotiate for wage increases or other important economic improvements in our contracts.

Social Security is needed now more than ever. Preserving it is just one of the many challenges that must be addressed as the demographic tidal wave of baby boomers

start retiring in 2008. But instead of the president's scare tactics, bipartisan responsible solutions must be adopted to make the Social Security system healthy throughout the 21st century.

**OPEIU members have an important role to play in saving Social Security.**

## A Call To Action! We Need Your Help!

1. Read and share The Working Person's Nine-Point Guide to Social Security Privatization — which follows this 'Call To Action' — with your family and friends.

2. Call and leave a message for your senator or representative at their home offices in your state or at their congressional office in Washington, D.C., using the toll-free line: 1-888-355-3588.

3. Write letters to the editor of your local newspapers.

4. Find out when your senators or representatives are holding town hall meetings on Social Security and get as many of your family and friends as you can to attend.

5. Join AFL-CIO President John Sweeney in urging your union's health and pension plan investors to come out against privatizing Social Security.

6. Get more information at the following sites and also share it with family and friends:

[www.aflcio.org/issuespolitics/socialsecurity](http://www.aflcio.org/issuespolitics/socialsecurity);

[www.retiredamericans.org](http://www.retiredamericans.org); and

[www.EOOnline.org](http://www.EOOnline.org).

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# The Working Person's Nine-Point Guide to Social Security Privatization

*Prepared by Will Parry, OPEIU member and president of the Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans; and Maureen Bo, OPEIU international vice president emerita and board member of the Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans*

## **ONE: The crisis is phony.**

The Social Security actuaries say the system can pay all benefits for 38 years. The bipartisan General Accounting Office says 48 years. Both sets of experts used extremely conservative assumptions. Even after those dates, Social Security will always be able to pay a higher benefit (adjusted for inflation) than what retirees will receive today.

## **TWO: Privatization would be a financial disaster.**

It would drain trillions of dollars from the Social Security Trust Fund, force steep benefit cuts for both current and future retirees, and increase the nation's deficit catastrophically.

## **THREE: Private accounts are risky and have hidden costs.**

Most workers would find it impossible to assess market risks prudently, so they will have to rely on brokerage houses. But by doing that, an estimated 20 percent to 30 percent of their accounts would be drained off in brokerage-related fees. Those who retire when the market is down would be devastated, as was the case for anyone who was invested in companies like Enron a few years ago. Another cautionary tale can be found in the experience of our friends from England. Their move to privatize their pension system in the 1980s has backfired and only exacerbated a looming fiscal crisis.

## **FOUR: To get more dough, take off the cap.**

If there really is a shortfall, remove the indefensible cap on taxable earnings (currently \$90,000) so that high wage earners pay their rightful share. That would extend the solvency of Social Security for decades.

## **FIVE: It's not just for retirees.**

Social Security provides every worker who pays FICA taxes with the disability insurance equivalent to a \$350,000 policy and a survivor life insurance benefit equivalent to \$400,000.

## **SIX: It's been "old reliable" for 65 years.**

Month after month, year after year, Social Security checks go to the right person, on the right day, in the right amount, to the right address or bank account. This unequalled level of reliability has been sustained since the first checks went out in 1940 — and at an administrative cost of about 1 percent. Moreover, benefits are adjusted annually to keep up with inflation. And no retired worker ever outlives his Social Security benefit. None of these guarantees apply to private accounts.

## **SEVEN: Privatization is a windfall for Wall Street.**

Bush's scheme is designed to transfer billions of dollars from the working people who create the nation's wealth to the lucky Wall Street brokerage houses that Bush picks who will have additional money to finance their yachts, fancy cars, and bloated lifelong pensions. No worker anywhere

had any part in cooking up this extortion scheme.

## **EIGHT: The current method of calculating benefits based on wages works.**

Bush has floated a plan to change calculation to a price basis, which will cut benefits significantly. As it is, Social Security provides modest income; cuts by any method will injure current and future retirees. To put the potential change in perspective, the 3.5 million current retirees who live in poverty would balloon to 10.5 million under Bush's proposal. The Social Security Administration chief actuary says that the new formula would lead to a benefit cut of 9.9 percent in 2022, 25 percent in 2042, and 46 percent by 2075.

## **NINE: The privatization scheme is not flexible.**

Bush talks about how private accounts give people control over their money. That is simply not true. The guidelines for what can be invested in will be stringent. The money cannot be touched until you reach your retirement age. When it is time to finally draw from the account it has to be immediately put into an annuity.



**The need for Social Security grew out of the stock market crash of 1929! So now we should put our money back there?**



## OPEIU Holds First National Public Employee Conference

**T**he OPEIU held its first Public Employee Conference February 16-18, 2005. The conference was designed to provide a forum for local unions with public employee members to discuss issues of common concern, including organizing management and confidential employees, as well as to develop strategies to advance the wages and working conditions of public employees. There were 10 OPEIU locals in attendance.

“This is the first time we’ve held a conference specifically

geared toward organizing and educating public employee members,” President Michael Goodwin said. “The OPEIU is looking forward to organizing thousands of managerial and confidential employees throughout the country. We currently represent this classification of employees in Florida, New York and Michigan, and are looking to broaden our representation to other states.”

Another meeting will be scheduled for the fall to report on the progress of the initiative.



**President Goodwin opens first OPEIU Public Employee Conference.**



**Local 100 President Richard Ellis and Vice President Greg Blackman (seated to his left) make a presentation on labor-management cooperation committees. Local 512 President John Strachan, who also presented, is seated to the right of Ellis.**



**Standing right to left, John DeTizio (MAGE Local 2002), Joe Sano (OMCE Local 153) and Richard Lanigan (Local 153) present a workshop on organizing state government supervisory and professional employees.**

## New Union Plus Card Launched

**O**PEIU members are eligible for a new version of their Union Plus credit card program from Union Privilege. The new Union Plus Credit Card will give cardholders benefits designed exclusively for union members and their families. The card, which has already saved members hundreds of millions of dollars since its creation in 1996, will offer new features including low interest rates, help for members on strike or facing extreme hardship and strong fraud protection.

“The Union Privilege benefit program has improved the lives of working families by saving them money on their everyday purchases and financial transactions,” AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney said. “The cornerstone of that benefit program is the Union Plus Credit Card – a very successful benefit that includes one in four members of AFL-CIO unions. Like union membership, the Union Plus Credit Card truly works for working families.”

The credit card, part of a package of consumer benefits available to union members through the Union Privilege program, is endorsed by the AFL-CIO and its member unions, and issued by HSBC. More than 3.1 million union members carry the card. Unlike most other credit cards, Union Plus balance transfer rates are fixed until the balance is paid off.

Current Union Plus Credit Card holders will automatically be enrolled in the new program and many will receive a newly designed card in the mail. Non-enrolled union members will be eligible to join and receive the new benefits. For information about all the benefits available to OPEIU, please visit [www.unionplus.org](http://www.unionplus.org). For information about the Union Plus Credit Card, OPEIU members may call 1-800-522-4000 or visit [www.unionpluscard.com](http://www.unionpluscard.com).

## Local 8 Members Recommend Historic Changes to Enhance Democracy

**L**ocal 8 membership has doubled since 1995, with members now working all over Washington State. Yet, despite the Local's expanded geographic boundaries, primarily those members living in the Seattle area make all the decisions. In addressing the need for greater union democracy and participation, the Local's leadership called for a two-day summit for members to chart how to expand representation and to increase member involvement, according to Local 8 Organizing Director Cindy Schu.

With the historic mandate of redesigning the Local's structure, nearly forty members gathered in Tokeland on March 5-6 to hammer out recommendations to Local 8 members and their Bylaws Committee. Through two task-oriented workgroups, summit participants developed a plan to expand the Local's Executive Board for greater participation from members living outside of the Seattle area and reestablished the Membership Action Committee to carry out six plans to increase membership participation.

"The work we did at our statewide summit was historic for our union," Local 8 member Tommy McLean said. "Local 8 has always been at the forefront of progressive change. I feel proud to be a part of this union and I'm ready to help lead into the future."

Summit participants also learned more about the various proposals being considered for restructuring the AFL-CIO and central labor councils and had an opportunity for lively debate and discussion.

This was the second Local 8 statewide summit; the first one, held in 2003, laid the groundwork for the 2005 summit, in which these historic recommendations were made.



Members from across Washington State meet in Tokeland to develop a plan to increase membership representation and involvement.

## Local 251 Elects Officers

**O**PEIU Local 251 just saw its first major snow storm in many years. On Tuesday, March 15, I-25 north of Albuquerque to the Colorado border was shut down, as was I-40 from the Arizona border to the Texas border because of heavy snow drifting, icy roads, and inexperienced drivers. The next day was sunny, with dry roads, and crispness to the air. Considering the unpredictable weather in New Mexico, the Local was certainly happy that its general membership meeting was the prior week.

The Local held its nominations for officers in February 2005 and its present officers and trustees were nominated, approved, and voted back in by acclamation. The exception was Amy Cogswell, who replaced retiring Recording Secretary Suzanne Visor. Cogswell was also voted in by acclamation. Installation of officers was held at the general membership meeting on March 10.

President Sue Rivas called for a special general membership meeting to discuss pre-negotiation issues with the membership. The Local's team comprised of Rivas, Secretary-Treasurer Peggy Collins, Vice President Becky McIntyre-Pacheco, and Recording Secretary Cogswell, will be at the bargaining table with International Representative Paul Bohelski. At issue, as it is with other locals, will be wages, healthcare and its premiums and benefits. Much groundwork and research will be done between now and sitting at the bargaining table.

The members of Local 251 appreciate the hard work and many hours put into bringing the members the much improved *White Collar*. Its size and quality paper make it easier reading and reflects the professionalism of our International union.

Any member of the International is welcome to visit Local 251's website: [www.opeiulocal251.org](http://www.opeiulocal251.org). If one needs to contact us, just send your comments to [pmcolli@unionplus.net](mailto:pmcolli@unionplus.net).

## Lobbyist Corner

# Now Our Work Begins

**Submitted by OPEIU Lobbyist Robert McGlotten of McGlotten & Jarvis**

**G**eorge W. Bush, this country's 43rd president, has proposed to change the basic structure of Social Security by allowing workers to invest in something called "private savings accounts." The administration claims that these accounts will yield larger payouts for workers who invest and will "save" the trust fund from going "bankrupt".

The administrations' budget for the next fiscal year, which begins October 2005, would freeze, slash, or eliminate dozens of programs and shift more of the costs of programs such as medical and housing to the state and local governments. Working families are not to blame for the president's soaring budget deficit and workers should not carry the burden of Social Security financing.

### ***OPEIU's agenda will seek to correct these inequities in the 109th Congress:***

- Protect Social Security from "private savings accounts";
- Fight against President Bush's fiscal 2006 budget plans that advocate the elimination of, or drastic cuts to, 154 programs that affect needed assistance to working families and their communities;
- Provide an increase in the minimum wage (now only \$5.15 an hour);
- Support legislation that will enhance the quality of education for children;
- Adopt a patients "Bill of Rights";
- Employee "Free Choice Act," which allows freedom of choice to form unions;
- Promote legislation for a new prescription drug program that will control the cost to our seniors;
- Protect private and government workers' pension plans;
- Fight to maintain workplace standards; and
- Oppose changes being proposed by the administration that would affect the current civil service and merit systems.

We will also fight for specific legislation important to individual Local Unions and Guilds.

### ***Take Action — Your Involvement is More Important Than Ever!***

Many people ask — what difference can I make? Can one voice alone make the president stop his assault on working families, or make Congress protect our rights? It's true that one voice alone is easy to dismiss. But the sound of our voices strongly united cannot be silenced. We must take action together to defeat these measures. Your involvement is more important than ever! Here's how you can take action today!

Contact your local representatives. Every letter counts. Every phone call can make a difference. If you prefer to make written contact, OPEIU advises you to either mail or e-mail all correspondence.

If you don't know who your House representative is, the Clerk of the House maintains addresses and phone numbers of all Members and Committees: Clerk of the House, US Capitol, Room H154, Washington, DC 20515; phone (202) 225-7000; hours 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Please direct your questions about communication with your senators to the specific office(s) in question, using the following format: Office of Senator (Name), United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510.

You may also phone the U.S. Capitol's switchboard at (202) 224-3121. An operator will connect you directly with the House or Senate office you request.

If you are not sure who your representative is, the following websites contain links to congressional directories: <http://www.house.gov/writerep> and <http://www.senate.gov>. You can also access this information at your local library, or call the International Union at 212-675-3210 for a booklet listing congressional representatives.

**Your action is needed. Do your part to help yourself and your family!**



# WASHINGTON WINDOW

## ‘Fuzzy Math’ to ‘Phony Arithmetic’

**F**ive years ago, when Al Gore was running against George W. Bush, the phrase “fuzzy math” entered political language. We think it referred to Bush’s plan to cut taxes for the rich, which he, Bush, claimed would set off an economic boom.

Now, we can add the phrase “phony arithmetic” to the political lexicon – and it describes perfectly another Bush scheme: Partial privatization of Social Security.

In an interview with reporters, Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz, known for his outspoken pro-worker views—among other things—as top economist at the World Bank from 1997-2000, coined the phrase when discussing Bush’s plan.

The “phony arithmetic” occurs several ways, he added:

- Bush understates the costs of his plan. Depending on which version you hear, he wants to divert one-sixth to one-third of Social Security payroll tax revenues into private accounts, starting in 2009. Because privatization wouldn’t start until then, and because Bush’s budget forecasts cover only the next decade, the cost figure he uses is artificially low.

Social Security now uses the money from payroll taxes to pay current recipients, and still runs a surplus. Replacing diverted money would cost \$754 billion from 2009-15, Bush says. Stiglitz said the real cost is \$1.4 trillion over the first decade—2009-18—of the diversion and \$4.2 trillion in the second decade, 2019-28.

- The government would be forced to go into financial markets to borrow

that money, on top of what it already borrows—including what it borrows from the Social Security trust fund.

That would drive up interest rates, as the government would compete with private firms and individuals for the same pool of money, Stiglitz notes. That’s another cost not in Bush’s plan.

- Bush contends Social Security is heading for bankruptcy. He bases that claim on projections by the system’s trustees, using extremely conservative estimates of growth and employment, over the next 30-40 years.

The trustees construct a “worst-case” scenario, a compromise middle ground and a “best case” scenario. Bush used the worst case: Annual economic growth of 1.8 percent yearly and joblessness staying stuck at its present high of 5.5 percent.

“But even during the economic slowdown of 2000-2001, we had productivity growth of 2-1/2 percent to 3-1/2 percent,” Stiglitz pointed out. Add growth in the labor force—admittedly small as the population ages—and you come up with an annual growth rate of 3 percent to 4 percent.

Higher growth often produces higher wages, which in turn increase Social Security payroll tax receipts, he noted.

Jobless numbers show the same pattern, Stiglitz pointed out. Economists now say joblessness can drop to 4.5 percent—it used to be 6 percent—without triggering inflation. He noted it fell as low as 3.8 percent under President Clinton, without inflation.

Stiglitz’ conclusions? “The 1.8 percent number is used to engender panic.

But we’re not in a panic. They’re talking as if these numbers are real,” he said of Bush, the GOP and business, all pushing privatization. “Those are made-up numbers. The crisis is artificial.” Use normal numbers: No crisis.

- What isn’t artificial, and what Bush doesn’t discuss, is the risk of investing Social Security money in the stock market.

“Some of the phony arithmetic is based on much higher returns from stocks than from Treasury bills,” the bonds that Social Security now buys with its excess payroll taxes. “But the only reason you’re getting a higher return from stocks is because of the higher risks.”

If the market drops, on the other hand, he notes, the basic Social Security private account would—after brokers’ commissions and the like—decline by 50 percent from its initial value. That would leave “private” investors—us—stuck with a Bush scheme that would pay them far less than basic Social Security does now.

“If people got only \$5,000-\$10,000 from Social Security every year” because the market crashes, “there will be another big bailout and that’s an impact liability” of the government that Bush doesn’t discuss, Stiglitz added.

You can see why Stiglitz said Bush’s Social Security scheme is full of “fuzzy arithmetic.” But with all due respect to Stiglitz, we recall a political phrase that could be an even better description of Bush’s privatization plan.

It came from Bush’s father: “Voodoo economics!”

## Work and Health

### Obesity and Diabetes

**Submitted by Jeffrey S. Freed, M.D.**  
**OPEIU Local 153 Health Fund Medical Director**

The occurrence of obesity among adults overall in the United States increased from 22.9 percent during the period 1988-1994 to 30.5 percent during 1999-2002. The occurrence of obesity among adults with diagnosed diabetes remained high during those periods, rising from 45.7 percent to 54.8 percent. Obesity in persons with diabetes is associated with poorer control of blood glucose levels, blood pressure, and cholesterol, placing people with diabetes at higher risk for both cardiovascular disease (e.g. heart attacks and strokes) and microvascular disease (e.g. gangrene of the extremities). Conversely, intentional weight loss is associated with a reduced incidence of death among overweight persons with diabetes.

Weight management is the key to the prevention of diabetes in those persons with a genetic predisposition to the disease. Healthy eating and physical activity can help reduce the numbers of persons at risk for diabetes and reduce the risk of complications and premature death among those who already have diabetes.

What are defined as physical activities are not those things we do in the course of a normal day. They are energy utilizing efforts that are done for at least 45 minutes per day, raising the heart rate and causing us to burn fat for energy. The National Institute of Health now recommends that we do physical activity every day of the year. For many of us with active, busy lives this is impossible. But a minimum of three sessions a week is necessary for good heart and body health.

There have been a large number of fad diets promoted over the last 10 years. Low carbohydrate, low fat and high fat regimens have all been recommended. The first thing that is really necessary to decrease body weight, however, is to decrease the num-

ber of calories ingested every day. Increasing the amount of fruits and vegetables, and decreasing the amount of simple sugars and red meat eaten, will help the process of weight loss. More fish and chicken will always be a health benefit.

The thing one needs most to lose weight is a real desire to do it. And more importantly, a real desire to permanently keep

down the number of calories consumed is a must. Whether it is to prevent or help treat diabetes, control high blood pressure, reduce cholesterol, or just to look and feel better, losing weight is beneficial to everyone.

*Jeffrey S. Freed, M.D., P.C. specializes in general surgery/proctology. He can be reached at (212) 396-0050.*

## SAVE THE DATES!

### NORTH CENTRAL/ERIE AREA EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

(REGION VII)

June 3-5, 2005

Hilton Chicago

720 S. Michigan Avenue

Chicago, Illinois

### NORTHEAST AREA EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

June 10-12

Sheraton Suites on the Hudson

500 Harbor Boulevard

Weehawken, New Jersey

## Local 2 Member Receives Union Plus National Labor College Scholarship

**L**ocal 2 member Kimberly Lockhart was among 29 union activists this year to receive Union Plus Education Foundation scholarships to attend the George Meany Center-National Labor College (GMC-NLC). The scholarship winners received cash awards to attend the college as part of the Union Plus National Labor College Scholarship program, administered by GMC-NLC.

The scholarship winners, who represent a wide range of union affiliations, goals and accomplishments, are enrolled in the GMC-NLC, which is located in Silver Spring, Maryland. The GMC-NLC, one of the world's premier labor education institutions, has graduated nearly 800 students from its Bachelor of Arts (BA) program since becoming a college in 1997.

Lockhart works in Washington, D.C., as

a training coordinator in the hazardous material department of the International Association of Fire Fighters. "Attending the GMC-NLC helped me learn a lot about union issues around the country. I have been applying the things I learned at work," Lockhart said.

She is hoping to get her B.A. next year, and says, "Without the scholarship, I would not have been able to attend the program."

Leslie Tolf, Union Privilege president, further explains the importance of financial support: "Higher education has become increasingly more difficult for working families to afford. That is why we are proud to sponsor the Union Plus National Labor College Scholarship program and help women and men in the labor movement achieve their dreams for a higher education."

"The National Labor College offers a unique program that is tailor-made for working women and men," Tolf adds. "The program allows students to attend classes at their own pace; the curriculum complements the work and union experiences of students; and it provides a learning assessment program that enables many students to obtain college credit for their relevant life and work experiences."

In addition to the B.A. program, GMC-NLC offers a Master's in Public Administration and a Master's of Arts in Legal and Ethical Studies. The Master Degree programs are offered in partnership with the University of Baltimore. GMC-NLC also offers certificate program and individual program studies. For more information about the GMC-NLC, please call Lydia Clemons at (301) 431-6400, ext. 5404.

## OPEIU Youth Makes the Big Plays!

**O**PEIU Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin Kistler's son, Kevin Jr., has been making big plays on the sporting field for years. From his Little League days that took him to Havana, Cuba, to his high school varsity football team and now, as a freshman football and lacrosse player at Tufts University, Kevin Jr. has shown 'em how it's done!

When Kevin was just 13 and a student at



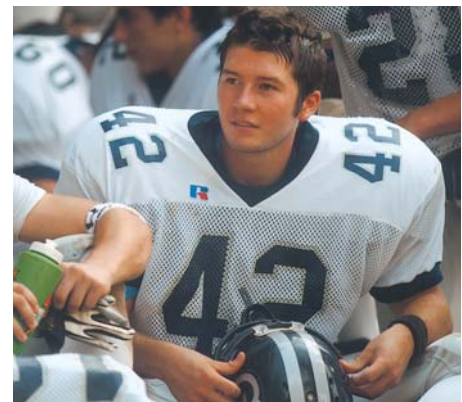
**Thirteen-year-old Kevin Kistler Jr. talks to reporters in Havana, Cuba in 1999.**

Maryland's Mater Dei School, he was one of 78 other Little League and inner city baseball and basketball players chosen to attend the first game between American big-leaguers and Cuban ballplayers in more than 40 years. More than 50,000 fans filled Havana's Latinoamericano Stadium, including President Fidel Castro, to watch the match between the Cuban national team and the Baltimore Orioles. After the game, which the Orioles won in the 11th inning, 3-2, Kevin was interviewed by Spanish television, as well as *The Miami Herald* where he was quoted as saying, "The people are really nice here. I don't think the government gives them what they deserve."

While in Cuba, Kevin and his American friends also played the Cuban National Youth Team in a friendly game of basketball.

"I'm really proud of Kevin," his father says. "He's always been great at sports, but more importantly, he's always been a great kid. He displays a true sense of sportsmanship and integrity, on and off the field."

*White Collar* would love to hear about your son or daughter's accomplishments. Send to Editor, *White Collar*, 265 West 14th Street, Sixth Floor, New York, N.Y. 10011.



**Kistler as a high school junior ...**



**... and today as a freshman at Tufts University.**

## OPEIU Provides Relief to Tsunami Victims

**M**oved by the tragedy in Southeast Asia, the OPEIU Executive Board voted at its January meeting to contribute to Save the Children's humanitarian efforts for the victims of the tsunami. The \$10,000 check was presented by OPEIU International President Michael Goodwin to Save the Children's Vice President and Managing Director of U.S. Programs, Mark Shriver, on January 20.

"Save the Children is truly grateful for the generous donation of the working men and women of OPEIU," Shriver said. "First the world grieved for the victims of the tsunami tragedy, and then they do what people do for others in their hour of need — they helped. OPEIU's heartfelt financial contribution is indispensable to the relief effort, because without it, organizations like Save the Children would be without the resources to have a meaningful impact in this devastated region."

Save the Children is uniquely qualified to be a leader on the frontlines of the world's response to the tsunami. First, for more than 70 years the non-profit, child-assistance organization has worked in the United States and around the world helping children and families obtain better health, education and economic opportunities. In addition, Save the Children is familiar with the tsunami-impacted region, having worked there for years. Finally, the organization has an understanding of how to manage a natural or man-made disaster, having responded quickly to these types of ordeals throughout its existence.

The \$200 million that Save the Children has raised worldwide will be used to implement short-term and long-term relief campaigns primarily focused in the devastated areas of Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India. In the immediate future Save the Children will provide necessities such as food, water and medicine. Equally pressing is the importance of preventing the exploitation of lost or orphaned children. Over the long-haul the strategy will be reestablishing economic independence through loans and job training, along with rebuilding the infrastructure of schools, homes and health centers. It will also be a priority to provide emotional counseling for the victims.

Save the Children's efforts go far beyond relief for the tsunami victims. The organi-

zation also does vital work on behalf of the children of the United States. In seventeen U.S. states, Save the Children has a multi-faceted approach designed to give disadvantaged and at-risk youth the building blocks for a successful transition into adulthood, educational development and a healthy lifestyle. Having built long-term relationships within the communities, Save

the Children focuses on providing the type of literacy programs, supervised physical activity and nutritional guidance to make a real difference in a child's life.

If you'd like to make a donation to Save the Children, please send it to:

**Save the Children**, 2000 M Street, N.W., Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20036, Attention: Mark Shriver. Thank you.



**President Michael Goodwin (right) and Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin Kistler (left) present Save the Children's Vice President and Managing Director of U.S. Programs Mark Shriver with a \$10,000 contribution.**

## Judi Butz Retires

After 29 years of service to OPEIU, Judi Butz, president of Local 5 in Denver, Colorado, has retired. Her commitment and dedication to the union is greatly appreciated, and she will be missed by all who worked with her over the years.

At a celebration honoring Butz, International President Michael Goodwin recognized her many accomplishments on behalf of Local 5 and the entire labor movement since she became an OPEIU member as an employee of the Walter G. Brauner III law firm. Judi has served with distinction as a Local 5 executive board member, vice president and president since 1992.

"Judi's first great love is Local 5 and its members," Goodwin said, "followed by her second love of politics. And because of her involvement in politics, Judi was able to be part of a movement that allowed thousands of union members in Colorado to enjoy a working families agenda."

Goodwin also recalled how Butz's contributions to the labor movement were well recognized with her service as a delegate to the Denver Area Labor Federation and as a vice president of the Colorado AFL-CIO.

"Judi also participated in the International Union, making sure that the union was moving forward," Goodwin said. "Her participation at OPEIU conventions has been invaluable. I sincerely thank you, Judi, for your support through the years," he concluded.



**Retiring Local 5 President Judi Butz and OPEIU President Michael Goodwin.**

## Workers' Rights Being Trampled By Employer

*(Continued from page 3)*

- Failure to submit to a Company required ... smoke/tobacco test.
- ... a violation of the ... Tobacco Free Workplace Policy is considered very serious misconduct and shall result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, at the company's sole discretion, as follows:

First occurrence: Unpaid suspension for a minimum of five days. With respect to an employee that tests positive for ... tobacco, at the conclusion of the suspension, the employee must pass a return-to-duty ... smoking test before he/she will be allowed to return to work. The Company will pay for one such test and further tests are at the expense of the employee. An employee that cannot pass the return-to-work test within 30 calendar days will be terminated from employment.

Upon returning to work after a first violation, an employee will be required to sign a Last Chance agreement and will be subject to unannounced follow-up testing for a period of three (3) years.

Second occurrence in any timeframe: Termination of employment pursuant to the "at will" employment relationship.

- A refusal to submit to a ... smoking test at the Company's request will result in termination of employment.

It goes on to outline its tobacco/smoking random test policy. Here's more:

- ... all employees will be required to state in writing their intentions regarding continuing their employment in 2005 as a non-smoker. Positions occupied by an employee that self-identifies as a smoker and/or fails to agree to be a non-smoker by January 1, 2005 will

be considered open effective January 1, 2005. While department managers will begin the recruiting process to fill these positions during the fourth quarter of 2004, employees will retain the right to their positions January 1, 2005.

- An employee not signing the intention to be tobacco free statement will be excluded from consideration for posted, open positions.

- Unannounced testing of all employees will take place the first week of January 2005. Employees testing positive are not eligible for the disciplinary process and will be terminated from employment January 7, 2005. At the Company's sole discretion, employment of a terminating employee may be extended for a limited time, generally not more than 60 days, to allow for a sufficient transfer of duties and information. In this case, the terminating employee will be excluded from the random tobacco/smoke testing program. The Company reserves the right to revoke the extension at any time as an "at will" employer.

Weyco, armed with their new anti-smoking policy, terminated four women shortly after the policy went into effect. The overwhelming question that needs to be asked is why would Weyco take such measures to terminate employees who were engaging in a personal activity at home such as smoking. Weyco claims that the reason for the policy was the sky rocketing cost of health care, a good answer, but it is without merit in this case. It was widely reported in the press that one of the women that was terminated, Anita Epolito, didn't belong to the Weyco health plan. Weyco was presented with this fact. That doesn't matter, a Weyco spokeswoman replied, because "she knew, starting Day One that the organi-



**A 14-year employee, Anita Epolito, left, with Cara Stiffler, refused to follow Weyco's smoking ban and was fired for it. (photo by Bridget Barrett for *The New York Times*)**

zation itself was going smoke free. Employees who smoke had a choice between smoking and working, and some chose smoking. I should mention that, to their benefit, some employees chose to quite smoking."

We must remember that there is a limit to the protection the Civil Rights Act gives us. Federal law only prohibits employers from discriminating on the basis of age, sex, weight, national origin, and other attributes. Smoking should be a statutory civil right — but it's not, it's just a personal choice. Non-union employees who are aware of what happened at Weyco should act to protect their personal rights and look to join the union!

This is one of the many reasons why unions are needed — to protect employees from this sort of abuse by an employer. If the employees of Weyco had a Collective Bargaining Agreement in place, this policy would have never been allowed.

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AFL-CIO-CLC