

## Ohio AFL-CIO President Visits Every CLC and ALF With Important Message: 2010 Election Cycle Can Dictate the Direction of Ohio For Decades to Come

Joe Rugola, President of the Ohio AFL-CIO, has been heard saying numerous times any meeting with two or more trade unionists in the room is a meeting worth having. So one can only imagine his excitement as President Rugola traveled the state of Ohio and visited every Central Labor Council (CLC) and Area Labor Federation (ALF) in a three-month span.

Crowds from a dozen to nearly a hundred filled union halls across the state as the Ohio AFL-CIO President visited every CLC and ALF in this short of time.

Although the visiting was nice and it was good for members to meet President Rugola, there was another reason for the visits: and that is the upcoming political season and the state of labor in Ohio and America.

“2010 is the year Ohio labor will shape the look of our state for many years to come. As we prepare for this year’s November elections, we need to capture the spirit and resilience I saw as I traveled the state talking to our rank-and-file. If we can do that, our agenda of a reindustrialized Ohio, strong enforcement of the prevailing wage, and secure public budgets will become reality in the years ahead,” said President Rugola.

Along with the political message, Rugola also stressed his three major points that he, and most labor leaders, feel needs to happen in order to bring

Ohio and America back to prosperity. “We need three things to happen. One, we need to reindustrialize and bring back manufacturing jobs that have been lost overseas due to bad trade deals. Two, we need strong prevailing wage laws so workers get paid a quality wage and help keep the

income of those building and construction workers in the local economy. And three, we need strong public budgets that will allow public members to provide the quality services needed in our communities. But we cannot only do one or two of these. These are all linked together and that is why we need to make sure labor stays united and works together every chance they can.”



*Ohio AFL-CIO President Joe Rugola speaks to a large gathering at the Toledo CLC about politics, health care reform and the need for strong CLCs to rebuild Ohio.*

One of the first CLC’s for President Rugola to visit was North Central, which is headed by Lynda Mobley. There, Rugola started his conversation with the importance of the 2010 political season but also stressed the importance each CLC will play in the outcome.

“We are moving into the toughest election cycle that any incumbent has ever faced. One of the biggest differences in this election will be the roles that the CLCs will play,” said Rugola. “We have to keep our folks focused on why we are in the mess that we are in today, and it’s not because Governor Strickland

# Rugola

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doesn't care about the lives of working people. It is going to be tough to remind our members who their friends are because in times like these it's easy to lose sight of that."

Ray Gruber, President of the Ashtabula Central Labor Council, said the membership was excited to know Rugola was making the trip to their area.

"The Delegates and guests that were present for the meeting were fired up after Joe's presentation. When they went back to their workplace they wanted to talk about Health Care reform and job creation to their fellow members. It meant a lot to the Delegates that Joe would take the time to come up to Ashtabula," said Gruber.

Donald Criner, President of the Shawnee District Labor Council echoed those remarks. "President Rugola gave a short but very adamant presentation on how important it is for each council throughout the state to be actively involved in all Local, State and Federal issues concerning labor. Having such a dedicated and hard working educator such as

President Rugola makes our work on the Local Labor Council so much easier."

It wasn't just the smaller CLCs that were energized by President Rugola's visits, but even those councils with a larger membership base.



Ohio AFL-CIO President Joe Rugola speaks to the North Central CLC

"The Toledo Area AFLCIO appreciated President Rugola taking the time out of his busy schedule to give such an inspirational message to our membership," said George Tucker, Executive Secretary of the Toledo Central Labor Council and President of the Northwest ALF. "We look forward to working more with Joe in the future and

working hard to get the endorsed candidates elected this fall."

After visiting nearly every CLC, Rugola had this to say about his tour of Ohio's labor leadership.

"Beginning in the fall of 2009, and continuing into early 2010, I had the opportunity to visit with all of our CLC's, and our Areal Labor Federations, and to speak with our members about the challenges we face in the years ahead. I have always believed that our locals and our CLC's are the heart of the

American Labor movement and all that we accomplish on behalf of our members is driven by our local leaders and activists. Every working person in Ohio and their families, union member or not, is counting on us to lead the way once again. With your support, 2010 will open a new era of hope for every worker in our great state."



Ohio AFL-CIO President Joe Rugola speaks to delegates and guests at the Dayton/Miami Valley CLC

# Health Care Reform: Union Leaders Outline Big Improvements for All Working Families

Following two days of intense discussions at the White House, union leaders believe they are on the verge of winning significant improvements for working families in the pending health care reform legislation.

In a conference call January 14 the AFL-CIO, President Richard Trumka told State Federation and CLC Leaders the final health care bill he expects to emerge is "a milestone."

"We've been fighting for health care for over 60 years, and we are on the threshold of a significant achievement....But we don't look at this as the end of the fight, but another step in the quest for real reform."

President Trumka thanked union leaders for their tremendous work across the country that made these important improvements possible.

The discussions with the Obama administration envision major changes for all working families in the excise tax that the Senate bill imposes on high-cost health care plans, including:

- \* Raising the threshold at which family plans are taxed from \$23,000 to \$24,000 in 2013 for all working families, with annual increases of Consumer Price Index plus one. The threshold for single plans will be raised to \$8,900. (Taft Hartley plans will be considered at the family rate.)
- \* Raising the threshold on plans further if health care costs grow faster than expected from 2010-2013.
- \* Exempting dental and vision costs beginning in 2015, which could raise the threshold as much as \$2,000.
- \* Raising the threshold for plans that have significant numbers of women and/or older workers.
- \* Preserving the original Senate proposal to raise the threshold for plans with workers in high-risk professions, affecting more than 9 million workers.
- \* Preserving the original Senate proposal that would raise the threshold for plans with retirees

age 55 and up.

- \* Providing transitional relief for employers and workers to adjust to the tax.
- \* Temporarily raising the threshold for high-cost states, affecting more than 38 million workers.
- \* Providing a five-year transition window (year 2018) for state and local employee plans and plans negotiated through collective bargaining agreements before they are subject to the tax, as typically is done when federal laws affecting workers are enacted so that agreements will not have to be renegotiated.
- \* The ability for bargaining plans to go into the exchange in 2017.

There are several other areas still to be resolved before a final bill is achieved, including employer responsibility to pay a fair share of health care costs.

"We've seen tremendous progress over last couple of days, but we are continuing the fight to increase our priorities in the health care reform bill," President Trumka said.

This conversation came off the heels of the AFL-CIO National Call-In Day where unions across the state helped members get connected to their Congressperson and urge them to pass a health insurance bill that expands coverage and does not tax the middle class.

"We had great success during this national call-in day in making sure Ohio's Democratic Congressional Delegation understood labor's position," said Joe Rugola, President of the Ohio AFL-CIO. "We are on the cusp of something great for this country, and with the help of Ohio's labor leaders and rank-and-file, we are closer than ever to passing the first real health-care reform bill since the New Deal. We simply cannot afford to pay for health care at the bargaining table and additionally through new taxes. There is no doubt we made the voice of Ohio Labor heard strong and clear in Washington, D.C."



# Unions Battle Verizon-Frontier Deal and \$600 Million Tax Break

Submitted by: **Mike Hall, AFL-CIO**

There is an oddly named tax loophole—the Reverse Morris Trust—that is so big and lucrative Verizon is getting ready to pull \$600 million through it if its sale of rural phone landlines in 14 states to Frontier Communications is approved.

Not only does Verizon stand to pocket the \$600 million tax break, but a similar deal in New England shows consumers' phone and Internet services are likely to deteriorate and workers' jobs may be put in jeopardy.

The Communications Workers of America (CWA) and Electrical Workers (IBEW) are fighting the sale and are backing soon-to-be introduced federal legislation to close the loophole. The law now allows Verizon and other companies to sell assets tax-free to smaller companies such as Frontier, that end up burdened by debt. (For a detailed look at the Reverse Morris Trust, [click here.](#))

Less than three years after Verizon's sale of its New England landlines to FairPoint Communications, FairPoint has filed for bankruptcy. Now, workers face cutbacks and job losses, customers complain about deteriorating service and the lack of high-speed broadband and other new technologies. Hawaiian Telecom also filed for bankruptcy after Verizon used the same tax loophole to dump its landlines in Hawaii.

If the Verizon/Frontier deal is approved, Frontier would be saddled with some \$3.3 billion in debt while consumers and workers in the 14 states would be in the same dire situation as those in New England and Hawaii.

Not only is current service likely to deteriorate, but Frontier's \$3.3 billion debt makes it doubtful it would be able to build out high-speed broadband or provide other advanced telecommunications services to consumers.

IBEW President Edwin Hill says if the sale is approved, it would have a lasting and residual effect on the consumers and quite frankly will be quite devastating. With the broadband deployment, the service quality, the economic development and jobs are all at risk.

The Reverse Morris Trust is "backward thinking and bad public policy," says CWA President Larry Cohen.

The tax loophole means the government is spending hundreds of millions of dollars to subsidize large companies to exit the business of investing in our network.

The deal is a "tax scam, at its base," added Ben Scott, policy director of Free Press, a media reform group. In a Reverse Morris Trust deal, the selling company can avoid paying taxes on its sold assets as long as its shareholders end up with more than 50 percent of stock of the buying company. Rep. Paul Hodes (D-N.H.) says he will soon introduce legislation to close the loophole.



Union members from Ohio and West Virginia rally in Charleston, WV in January 7, 2010.

## Casino Implementing Legislation in the Works

Submitted by: **Tim Burga, Ohio AFL-CIO Chief of Staff**

The General Assembly is preparing legislation necessary to implement the casino ballot initiative, State Issue 3, which was passed last November. The legislation which must be finalized during the first half of this year will establish a gaming commission and other policies that will govern operations of the casinos in Toledo, Cincinnati, Columbus and Cleveland. The Ohio AFL-CIO had a positive meeting with the casino operators at the end of last year discussing the implementing legislation and their commitments to union construction and neutrality for organizing the permanent workforce.

At the time of this publication Penn National is reportedly talking with Columbus city leaders about the possibility of changing the city location where the casino is to be constructed. This presents a challenge in that the Ohio Constitution would need to be amended again as State Issue 3 was site specific. If this were to occur the General Assembly would have until February 3 to place the Columbus site change on the state ballot for the May elections.

The Ohio AFL-CIO has made its viewpoint known to state and city leaders that the voters spoke last November and that there should be no delays in breaking ground for casino construction, putting people to work and collecting the taxes.

# Ohio Union Initiatives Receive Millions in Stimulus Funds to Train Workers

**Submitted by: Amanda Sabol & Laura Harrison**

The U.S. Department of Labor recently announced that Ohio will receive five awards totaling \$23.4 million dollars to conduct green job training initiatives. Two grants dedicated to Ohio specifically total \$8.8 million, while Ohio will share a grant with other states that totals \$14.6 million.

"I am grateful to the Obama Administration, Labor Secretary Solis and our state partners for their commitment to retraining Ohioans for jobs in our growing energy sector with these ARRA resources," Governor Ted Strickland said.

The awards were announced in a conference call on January 6<sup>th</sup> by Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis; Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio; Rep. Mary Jo Kilroy, D-Columbus; and other Democratic lawmakers.

"This assistance will help Ohioans who may be struggling in the current economy to find jobs and long-term careers in our state's growing green energy fields," Strickland added.

The money is designed to help steel, auto, communication and other workers develop skills to work in clean-energy manufacturing and sustainable-energy fields — making, for example, wind turbines or solar panels.

The two separate Ohio-only grants are being funneled through the Ohio Electrical Labor-Management Cooperative Committee, jointly run by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the National Electrical Contractors Association, and the Communication Workers of America's National Education and Training Trust.

"Our outstanding award recipients were selected because their proposed projects will connect workers to career pathways in green industries and occupations through diverse partnerships," said Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis.

Solis estimated that the money would create about 2,000 worker-retraining "slots" in Ohio, and said the Department of Labor Web site will show "one-stop" training centers in Ohio and other states.

Here is a list of U.S. Department of Labor's Energy Training Partnership Grants that affect Ohio.

## 1. Grantee: International Transportation Learning Center

Amount: \$5,000,000

Areas Affected: Utah; New Jersey; New York City, and Columbus, OH

## 2. Grantee: Institute for Career Development (ICD), Inc.

Amount: \$4,658,983

Areas Affected: IN Counties: Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Newton, Jasper, Starke, Pulaski; NY County: Erie; OH County: Cuyahoga; PA County: Montgomery

## 3. Grantee: Communications Workers of America (CWA) National Education and Training Trust

Amount: \$3,969,056

Areas Affected: OH counties: Allen, Cuyahoga, Hamilton, Montgomery, Richland, Seneca, Shelby, and Trumbull

## 4. Grantee: International Training Institute for the Sheet Metal and

### Air Conditioning Industry

Amount: \$ 4,995,188

Areas Affected: MI: Detroit, Livonia, Ann Arbor, Warren, Wayne; OH: Cleveland, Toledo, Akron, Youngstown; MO: St. Louis; Illinois (E. St. Louis); CA: Los Angeles, Anaheim, Long Beach, Riverside, San Bernardino; NM: Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Las Cruces; TX: El Paso, Lubbock

## 5. Grantee: Ohio Electrical Labor Management Cooperative Committee

Amount: \$4,826,073

Areas Affected: Ohio



Visitors got to tour the solar panel installation program at IBEW Local 8 last spring.

For more information about job-training centers, call 1-877-872-5627 or go to [www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov) and look for the training link. Or, go to [www.servicelocator.org](http://www.servicelocator.org) and enter your ZIP code to find a nearby center.

Ken Fischer is the JATC Chairman for IBEW local 8 and thinks that Toledo is in a really good position to help members throughout Ohio be trained in green jobs.

"We just put up a training silo to teach competent climbing and tower rescue that will primarily be used for wind turbines," said Fischer. "We also have solar classes already in progress and classes on building automation systems. The grant is being awarded in these specific areas and we are capable of using all three."

## Fire Fighter Collective Bargaining Bill Passes House Committee

**Submitted by: James Carney, OAPFF**

The Ohio House passed HB 271 which would ensure collective bargaining rights for town-ships with a population less than 5000 but provide fire service for as many as 40,000 residents. That passage was an important first step in passing the bill into law.

With its beginning in the Township committee of the OAPFF in the early 2000 s under the guidance of then Committee Chair Jim Carney and then Legislative Director Mark Sanders this bill has encountered adversity.

“This is an important piece of legislation,” stated OAPFF President Mark Sanders. “Our goal throughout the years has been to see the loophole in ORC 4117 closed and the process to do that has now begun.”

During testimony in the State House, the OAPFF saw support from a number of sources. Among those testifying before the Commerce and Labor Committee were Governmental Affairs Director Carney, Fire Chief Bates of Madison Township representing the Fire Chiefs Association and a host of Local Affiliate Leaders.

According to President Sanders, “Those Local Affiliate Leaders were instrumental in passing this bill. Like the Beatles said, ‘We get by with a little help from our friends.’ Well our friends came through for us during this process.”

“It was great to see our members turn out. This is what unionism and political action is about. I was proud to see the support of our brothers and sisters,” added S/T Mark Horton.

Through a coordinated effort, local leaders spoke on a variety of topics. Washington Township Local 3036 President Don Schleich demonstrated the flaws of ORC 4117 under the current application of the language given today’s growing urban areas. Jackson Township Local 2672 President Scott Harr reviewed the latest court decision concerning the issue. That judicial review illustrated instances where there was disparity in the statute. Norwich Township Local 1723 President Brian Gatley testified that due to the lack of protection under ORC 4117, the township stonewalled and then abruptly stopped negotiations leaving the fire fighters with no recourse in obtaining an agreement.



*Ohio AFL-CIO Chief of Staff Tim Burga (front row right) joined fire fighters in getting HB 271 passed out of committee in helping to give these dedicated public servants a voice on the job.*

Outside help also came from Daphne Hawk (R-Jackson Township Trustee-Elect) who stated that she was shocked that fire fighters had no legal process to sit and discuss matters of any kind with their employers without the threat of retaliation, the same reason Lo-cal 2672 endorsed her campaign. Dennis Nicodemus (D-Truro Township Trustee) testified in support of collective bargaining commenting that it has worked well in his jurisdiction. Nicodemus added that politics and elections should not change the proven process of collective bargaining.

The Ohio AFL-CIO has been unwavering in their support of OAPFF efforts. President Joe Rugola and Chief of Staff Tim Burga have stood shoulder to shoulder with Ohio’s Professional Fire Fighters. In fact, they have been so passionate in their advocacy of our members right to bargain collectively that it seemed as though passage impacted them as much as our members.

“The AFL-CIO has been out front of this since the beginning. We cannot thank them enough,” said Director Carney.

“Thus far, we have been successful by bringing together OAPFF affiliate leaders, the Ohio Federation of Labor, the Ohio Fire Chiefs, and elected officials both Republican and Democrat to support and advocate for this bill. I believe, if we get our fair shot in the Senate, we can bring this issue to final passage. We are up to the challenge,” concluded President Sanders.

OAPFF, Local Affiliate Leaders and AFL-CIO work together to pass House Bill 271.

## Working America Starts 2010 Where 2009 Ended: Fighting For Working Families

Submitted by: *Dan Heck*

### Goodbye 2009

Along with the rest of the AFL-CIO, we had a busy 2009 in Ohio and across the country. In Ohio, we worked on a number of legislative campaigns around including local, state and national issues. We focused most of our efforts on the statewide education reform proposed by Governor Strickland and on national health care reform. Because Ohio has traditionally had the largest Working America program in the country, we also sent organizers from Ohio to key legislative battleground states around the country, including Nebraska, Indiana, Nevada, Arkansas and North Dakota. Many of these organizers have now returned to their home base in Ohio to help make 2010 another successful year of organizing.

Here in Ohio, we helped pass Governor Strickland's education reforms, collaborating closely with OFT in the work. We contacted community members in targeted communities around the state, and mobilized them to flood the Ohio Senate with thousands of calls in support of education reform. We targeted key state Senate leaders, including Senators Wagoner, Schuring, Schaffer, Harris and Carey. Our work was closely coordinated with the phone bank work done at the AFL-CIO State Fed, allowing us to generate a maximum number of calls from constituents in key areas.

Because we literally stood with our members and helped them make these calls, we were able to track how the different senate offices around the state were responding to the flood of calls. We shared this information with OFT and our other allies, and used it to shape our own message in the community. We were able to shape an effective, simple message that resonated with a large number of people, and used that experience to help our allies shape their message, too. As usual, we found that people were very willing to get engaged once they understood what was at stake with education reform. Over half of the people we talked to, including those in conservative areas like Ashland, were motivated to call their Senators in support of the education reform. We even moved people who had watched Senator Harris grow up to call him in support of the reforms!

We also worked in hand-in-hand with the rest of the AFL-CIO in Ohio to support real health care reform, and to help make sure Congress heard from our members in Ohio. Our members were particularly concerned with the need for a public health insurance option that would help keep costs down, and were concerned that their benefits may be taxed in the legislation. Members of Congress got this message loud and clear, with over 11,000 petitions, 1600 personal handwritten letters and hundreds of phone calls from our



members, adding to the voices of the union members who were also flooding Congress with calls and letters. We also displayed these letters

on huge signs at a number of earned media actions around the state. Our signs and letters were featured on local network TV in Cincinnati, and in the Huffington Post.

Although a small group of right-leaning democratic Senators have worked to undermine the public option and tax members' health care benefits, Congress has been advocating a stronger version of the bill thanks to the sustained pressure they have received from the AFL-CIO and our allies in this fight. Hopefully, the final health care legislation will respond to the concerns of the constituents.

### Hello 2010

Working America now has canvass offices up and running in Cincinnati, Cleveland and Columbus. From those offices, we will be able to organize members in communities all around the state. We will be urging new people to join Working America and the AFL-CIO, and motivating standing members to stay active and take action on issues. We will continue to listen to our members and respond to their concerns, and help them make sure their voices are heard on the issues that are affecting all of us.

The need for jobs has always been a huge issue with our members, and in the last year the problem has obviously gotten far worse. We expect jobs to remain the top concern of our members throughout the year. It is essential that our political leaders act decisively to help get working families back to work in Ohio. We closed out 2009 with a Worker's Summit in Columbus, where our members and other AFL-CIO members discussed the jobs crisis and how it is affecting them. We will carry this momentum forward in the new year, and demand that our politicians address the jobs crisis as their top priority.

As always, we will continue to work on local and statewide issues when possible. We are especially interested in ways to connect the jobs campaign to local needs. If you have a local issue related to jobs, health care, education or corporate accountability, please feel free to contact Dan Heck, the Regional Director for Working America at: [dheck@workingamerica.org](mailto:dheck@workingamerica.org) or 614-223-2197.

## Postal Service Plan Receives "Return To Sender" From Unions, Community

**Submitted by: Jeff Kranz, NALC Branch 143.**

On Wednesday, January 6<sup>th</sup> over 400 union members, elected officials, business owners, and residents packed the auditorium of Lima Senior High School to voice their opposition to a proposal by the United States Postal Service to close its distribution center there. Employees from the facility, who are represented by the APWU, were joined by union members from IUPAT, Laborers, NALC, and the UAW. Also in attendance were David Berger, Mayor of Lima, State Rep. Matt Huffman, State Senator Keith Faber, and representatives for Congressmen Bob Latta and Jim Jordan all of whom spoke out against the consolidation.

At issue is a study that is currently under review by the Postal Service that, if implemented, would move mail processing from the Lima plant to a similar facility in Toledo. Currently the Lima center processes mail for the 458 zip code area which is made up of cities, villages and townships from 9 counties. If the consolidation takes place all mail worked at the Lima plant would be moved almost 80 miles away which would result in the

reassignment of the nearly 100 workers currently employed there.

After a brief presentation by the USPS explaining their reasons for consolidation, the floor was opened up for questions and lines quickly formed at both microphones. Laura Kessen, President of APWU 438, pointed out to the crowd that the Lima facility is one of the most efficient mail processing centers in the country. It consistently ranks in the upper percentiles for productivity, efficiency, and on-time performance; Toledo is ranked lower in all of these categories. Allen County Board of Elections Director Keith Cunningham, upon hearing this, questioned Postal officials if moving the mail further away to a less efficient plant would result in later delivery times. Despite assurances from the Postal Service that this would not happen, most in attendance did not believe it. While many questions were raised during the 2-hour meeting, answers were not very forthcoming. Officials repeatedly said the study is still under review.

For more information about union and community efforts to block the plan visit [www.458postaltaskforce.com](http://www.458postaltaskforce.com).

## Budget Correction Bill Passes Due To Strong Dem. Unity

**Submitted by: Tim Burga**

When we last reported before the holidays, Senate Republicans were holding up passage of legislation (HB318) to balance the state budget. After weeks of stalling and partisan political maneuvers the Senate Republicans took the only legitimate budget option available, which was to agree with the Governor and House Democrats to defer the fifth and final year of a state income tax decrease. This option had broad support including key business groups and Ohio's major newspapers.

Senate Democrats are to be commended for holding firm on their position to support the House's bill, which included the tax cut deferment. Senate Minority Leader Capri Cafaro was instrumental in the legislative negotiations and her comments that the Democratic caucus, "Remain united in support of HB 318 as passed by the Ohio House of Representatives" were critical to the outcome.

"I am pleased the Ohio Senate has finally passed House Bill 318 nearly two months after the legislation reached our chamber. Throughout this budget process the Senate Democratic Caucus stood firm in support of a simple straight forward plan with widespread support from business, labor, law enforcement, teachers, university leaders and Ohio's major newspapers. HB 318 provides the stable funding that Ohio's schools and universities need while also protecting social services from

devastating cuts," said Sen. Cafaro (D-Hubbard)

Senate Republicans were trying to force sweeping changes to Ohio's construction funding laws, essentially threatening the jobs of many building trade unions and employees of minority construction firms. The agreement reached on the bill does not include these widespread changes. Instead, it contains a pilot program agreed to by organized labor that would provide construction options to three university projects around Ohio. Additionally, the bill restored needed funding for the State Employment Relations Board which the state federation and others in labor were seeking.

"This agreement to fill the budget hole is a win for labor because it avoids job cuts and funds critical services that were threatened by Senate inaction. It is good for every Ohioan that Senate Republicans finally joined Governor Strickland and the Ohio House members who put quality public services to the people of our state at the top of their priority list," said Joe Rugola, Ohio AFL-CIO President.

The Governor enacted the bill into law at the end of the year and as a result public education, libraries and other critical public services are safe from drastic budget cuts.

The agreement ended a long battle over how to fill an \$851 million shortfall in the state budget. The budget hole was created by an Ohio Supreme Court decision which made it impossible to use funds generated by VLTs (Video Lottery Terminals). These funds were included in HB 1; the state budget bill passed July 15, 2009.

# Labor in the Mahoning Valley Gives Back

**Submitted by: Bryon Bell**

Labor has a long tradition of giving back to the community, and the Mahoning-Trumbull Central Labor Council has shown themselves to be a shining example of just what caring workers can do for those in need around them. Through several campaigns throughout the year they show a particular focus on the needs of children in the community.

Labor Council President Bill Padisak explains, "A few years ago we learned that a lot of children lived at the Rescue Missions in Mahoning and Trumbull counties. The Rescue Missions couldn't provide toys for the kids, it is all they can do to feed and house them. We decided that at our annual Christmas Dinner Party we wouldn't charge people to attend but we asked that everyone bring an unwrapped toy for either a boy or girl. Many people bring two or three toys and some bring cash donations as well. This year more than 125 people showed up resulting in over 300 toys collected."

Cindy Michael, a Staff Representative for AFSCME Ohio Council 8 in the Youngstown area has seen the need first hand through her work with the Lena Mason Christian Fund – a charitable organization established as a memorial to members of her family brutally murdered in 2005.

"I actually was involved with helping to pass out the toys a few years ago as we had delivered toys to them through our Lena, Mason, Christian fund. Folks were lined up outside the mission as early as 5 a.m. in order to ensure their children have toys under the tree Christmas morning," Michael said. "Pastor Chuck of the Trumbull Mission is very concerned because toy donations are down this year. He told



*Cindy Michael of AFSCME Council 8 and the Mahoning Trumbull CLC helps package up the toys generously donated by the attendees of the CLC's annual Christmas Party*

me we are a Godsend. I told him we are the Union; we are just working folks who can help lend a hand to help out. It's just what we do. I am happy to have such generous folks as part of my Union family."

The Mahoning-Trumbull CLC's efforts go beyond their annual toy collection. President Padisak explains, "Besides the toy collection we have a coat and blanket drive which is coordinated with our Union Counselors group and the United Way. Last year we collected, dry-cleaned and distributed over 1700 coats to the needy in our valley."

"In February we will have our annual Spaghetti Dinner to benefit AFSCME Staff Rep. Cindy Michael's private foundation, The Lena, Mason, Christian Fund. Last year we sold over 1,000 dinners and netted more than \$8,000.00 which was used to give underprivileged children back to school supplies."

This year's spaghetti dinner will be held Saturday, February 6<sup>th</sup> from 11 AM to 5 PM at the IBEW Local 573 hall at 4550 Research Parkway in Warren, Ohio. Tickets are available at the door, and are only \$6.00 and children age five and under are admitted free.

For more information on the Lena Mason Christian Memorial Fund and the upcoming spaghetti dinner, go to [www.lenamasonchristian.org](http://www.lenamasonchristian.org) or contact Cindy Michael at [cindyamichael@yahoo.com](mailto:cindyamichael@yahoo.com).



A portion of the over 300 toys collected by the Mahoning Trumbull Central Labor Council at their 2009 Christmas Party for distribution to children in need throughout the Mahoning Valley.

# Four Good Reasons to Call a Budget Counselor Now

Submitted by: **Kathleen Kelly**

Just as it's a good idea to see a doctor if you not feeling well for any length of time, it's a good idea to talk with a budget and credit counselor to get relief from financial stress before it develops into something more serious.

Here are four reasons to call a counselor sooner rather than later:

**1. Get a New Attitude:** Even if you've gone over your expenses with a fine tooth comb, a budget review may turn up some new ideas for trimming expenses. Counselors can share creative ways to meet your needs while spending less.

**2. Talk Money With Your Honey:** When it comes to financial habits, opposites often *do* attract, and that can lead to sometimes serious disagreements about money. Talking with a counselor can bring an objective and impartial point of view to this often emotional subject.

**3. Build Stronger Credit:** About a third of your credit score is made up of the debt you carry and, in particular, how much of your available credit card lines you are using. If you carry high balances on one or more of your credit cards, your credit scores have likely taken a hit. Credit counseling can help you pare down your debt, and as a result, you may see your credit improve over time.

**4. Beat the Crowds:** Credit counselors gear up for their busy season after the holidays when bills start rolling in. By late January, counselor's phone lines are ringing off the hooks.

Ohio union members and their families are eligible for a free budget and credit counseling session through the Union Plus Credit Counseling Service. Visit [UnionPlus.org/CreditCounseling](http://UnionPlus.org/CreditCounseling) or call **1-877-833-1745** to speak to a counselor.



## Gov. Strickland Continues To Improve Ohio's Education System

Ohio Governor Ted Strickland and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Deborah Delisle today announced that Education Week's Quality Counts 2010 report ranked Ohio's educational system fifth in the nation. Ohio's overall grade was a "B-minus." Maryland, New York, Massachusetts and Virginia make up the remainder of the top five.

"This report confirms what the members of Ohio's educational community have known for several years – Ohio has a strong system that is viewed as a national leader," Delisle said. "I would like to commend the administrators, teachers, students and policy makers who have helped strengthen Ohio's education system."

Ohio continues to make steady progress, as this is the third straight year Ohio has gained ground in the annual Quality Counts report. Previously, Ohio ranked seventh in 2008 and sixth in 2009.

"Ohio's schools deserve a thunderous round of applause for making continuous strides each of the past three years in the Education Week rankings. We have made quality, affordable learning a priority for our students, knowing that a modern education with dedicated teachers and relevant



assessments will help prepare our children for success in the future," Strickland said. "I believe that our comprehensive education reform plan will further strengthen Ohio's national position for years to come. I appreciate the efforts of Ohio's educators, State Superintendent Deborah Delisle and members of the State Board of Education Board for their tireless efforts to strengthen our schools so our students can compete with students anywhere on earth.

"Education Week's validation of Ohio's efforts will also bolster Ohio's Race to the Top application for federal funds that we will be submitting in the next several days."

Of the six areas examined, Ohio's strongest performance was in standards, assessment and accountability. The state received a grade of "A", tied for third best in the nation. The analysis in this area focuses on how rigorous learning expectations were, how challenging assessments of learning are, and how both are linked to school accountability.

Ohio was the first state to internationally benchmark content standards, looking to leading countries around the world for the best practices. The report notes that Ohio's standards for mathematics and science have been cited as a model by other states.

## Health Care Reform: What's On The Table for Retirees and Seniors

*Submitted by: Norm Wernet*

Developments in national health care reform legislation are numerous and fast paced but retired workers and seniors stand to gain in the immediate future. The Alliance for Retired Americans along with other partners of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations made its demands known in a letter to Congressional leadership on January 8: "The LCAO strongly supports a number of elements currently in the House and/or Senate bills and believes they should be a part of the final bill, including:

- Closure of the Medicare Part D doughnut hole,
- Elimination of Medicare Advantage overpayments,
- CLASS program provisions,
- Nursing home transparency and improvement,
- Criminal background checks for employees of long-term care providers,
- Provisions to support and bolster the health care workforce,
- Improved care coordination services for chronic conditions, and
- A reinsurance fund for pre-Medicare eligible (55-64) retirees. "

The LCAO letter went on to detail additional policy concerns for Home and Community Based Care; The Elder Justice Act, Medicare D, Age Rating of Insurance Premiums, and Prevention and Wellness Services. The full letter may be found on the LCAO website: <http://www.lcao.org/docs/010810letter.pdf> .

### **Health Care Reform implementation Next Steps in Ohio**

The Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans is not standing idle until reform is enacted. The Ohio ARA has endorsed two immediate implementation steps we can take on the ground here in Ohio to drive down the cost of care and drive up the quality.

### **Ohio Home First Expansion HB 398 and SB 214 Endorsed**

Currently older Ohioans too often get sent to nursing homes from their hospital stays. That is not necessary. The current Medicaid law requires institutionalization to satisfy a paper trail and those who want the dollars. Better care is available in the community at lower a cost to the consumer and the



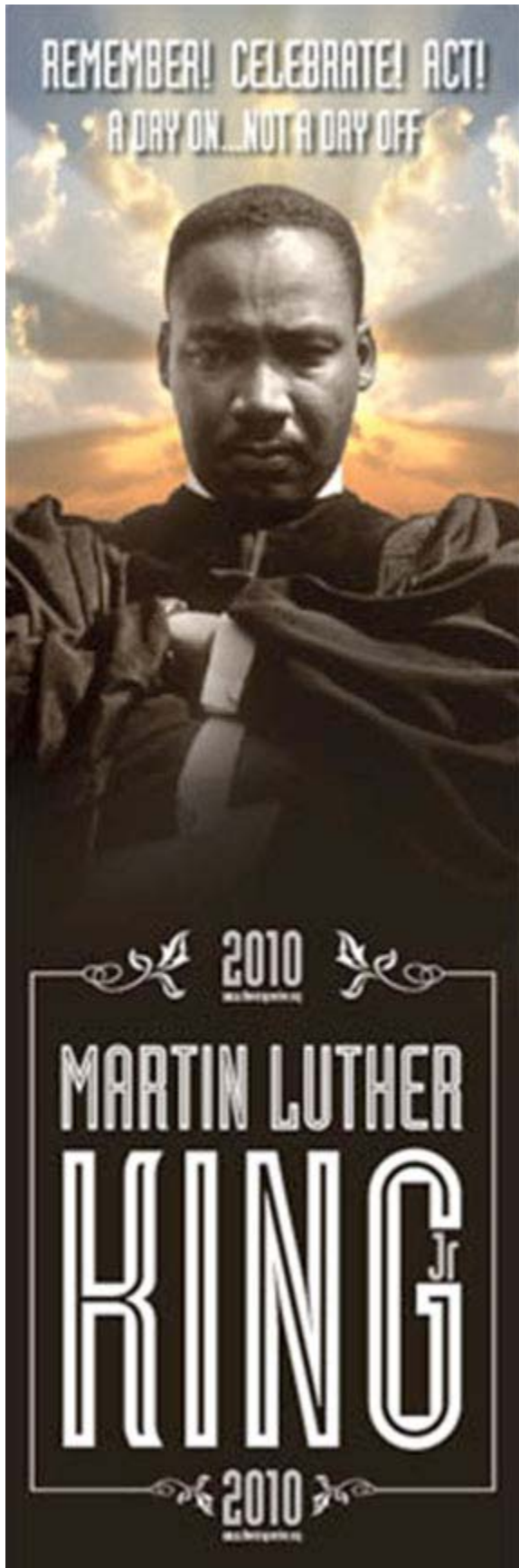
taxpayer. The Ohio Home First Expansion bills will change that law bias. Hospitals, doctors, and nursing homes would have to offer us and our families the choice to stay in our own home or assisted living first and help us find the resources and services necessary for that to happen.

The Ohio ARA endorsed this because is it could save taxpayers very large sums of money and provide more services to a greater number of older Ohioans and allow us to age in place. National reform makes provisions in its Home and Community Based Care sections to encourage this move and we can implement it now. More information is available on the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging website: <http://www.ohioaging.org/Pages/Advocacy> .

### **Campaign For Better Care: A Post Reform Act Implementation Strategy**

Are you an older adult with multiple chronic medical conditions? How many doctors or providers do you see? Do all of your healthcare providers talk with each other? Have you ever had the same test done several times separately for each provider? These are just a few of the questions that drive the Campaign for Better Care. In the questioning spirit of our union roots the Campaign for Better Care asks: Is there a way to coordinate care, make it more customer friendly and patient centered and cost us all less?"

The Ohio Campaign for Better Care will focus on older adults with chronic conditions and will kick off in February. A major press and teleconference are planned for Cleveland and Columbus. The Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans is looking for stories to tell about how we get care and how we think it could be improved. If you want to tell your story or your experience with an older parent or neighbor call or email Norm Wernet, 614.224.8271 x1004 or [nwernet@retiredamericans.org](mailto:nwernet@retiredamericans.org) .



## Plasterers and Cement Masons Graduate A Dozen Apprentices



*Apprentices from the Operative Plasterers & Cement Masons Local 132 celebrate their graduation and ready themselves for a strong career in the building and construction trades.*

**Submitted by: Joe Ciacchi**

The Operative Plasterers' & Cement Masons' Local Union #132 of Columbus, Ohio celebrated a graduation banquet on November 7th, 2009 to honor 12 apprentice graduates to their journeyman status. The room was filled with the attendance of the graduates, union business representatives, contractors, friends and guests.

Dinner and beverages were served and everyone had a good time. Local #132 business representatives John Green, Zeno Whittle and Joseph Ciacchi spoke to everyone, addressing the importance of how to meet the needs and changes of today's work industry, and being the best workers we can be. Guest speakers included Jeff Bing a contractor, Scott Compston a city of Columbus inspector (Scott also graduated from this program in 1991) and Mark Kuhn one of the instructors. We proceeded with the recognition of each graduate separately.

As they came forward they each received a framed certificate of completion from the State of Ohio, two OPCM Local 132 shirts, and some tools of the trade. We were all very proud of them and wish them well for the future. The graduates were: Dean Groves, Misty Blevins, Robert Curtis, Jason Brandenberry, Derek Young, Corrine Reeves, Nick Turner, Evelyn Collins, Dustin Basham, Chris Beverly, Matt Mendenhall, Robert Taylor.

To learn more about the OPCM apprenticeship program please contact Joe Ciacchi at 614-496-5734.