

## Ohio AFL-CIO Holds Legislative Conference

*Hundreds attend to lobby legislators, educate House and Senate members*

**Submitted by: Amanda Haseley**

Hundreds of union activists came together to lobby the legislators at the Ohio AFL-CIO's Biennial Legislative Conference April 22-23, 2009 in Columbus.

The event kicked off with a labor basics briefing for legislators and labor delegates covering four major subjects; Prevailing Wage, Collective Bargaining, Worker's Compensation and Union Shop. Afterwards the Labor delegates and their legislators had a chance to gather for informal discussion at the legislative reception.

Current state minority leader, Senator Capri Cafaro, and Governor Ted Strickland took a moment to greet the crowd.

The following day started with remarks by Tim Burga, Ohio AFL-CIO Chief of Staff; Matt Szollosi, House Speaker Pro Tempore; Richard Cordray, Ohio Attorney General; Joe Rugola, President, Ohio AFL-CIO; and Kevin Boyce, Treasurer. The Ohio AFL-CIO also awarded Dan Stewart, State Representative from the 25<sup>th</sup> District, as Legislator of the Year. "I wouldn't be here today, I wouldn't be a legislator, if it weren't for organized labor," remarked Stewart.

Delegates participated in discussions about five major issues including Buy American provision for stimulus monies, collective bargaining rights for Township Firefighters, accountability for charter

schools, collective bargaining rights for independent child and home care providers and health care insurance reform, which would include coverage for 110,000 more Ohioans. But before the activists and

leaders went to meet with legislators, many marched from the hotel to the statehouse to support CWA sisters and brothers in their efforts to receive a fair contract from the very profitable AT&T.



*Ohio Governor Ted Strickland speaks to attendees of the Ohio AFL-CIO Legislative Conference.*

AT&T's positive financial outlook continued into the first quarter of 2009, with analysts and the company's own executives agreeing that its \$3 billion profit beat expectations because of strong growth in

video, data services and wireless, all part of the integrated network supported by CWA members. "For this economy, it was an outstanding performance," one analyst said.

"AT&T also is well-positioned to help move our nation out of economic crisis and back into prosperity. If successful companies like AT&T don't step up in this economic recession, and instead hide behind it to force more cost shifting to workers, how will our economy recover?" said CWA President Larry Cohen in a statement. AT&T's demands would double and triple health care costs for some workers.

## Conference

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*CWA members, along with Legislative Conference attendees, legislators and working families, join in a rally to urge AT&T to bargain fairly with its employees.*

## CWA Continues Fight with Very Profitable AT&T

**by Mischa Gaus, Labor Notes**

In what could act as a signal to other big union companies, AT&T is playing on hard times to demand a raft of concessions. The telecommunications giant and its workers are battling over who will carry the burden for health care: AT&T wants to as much as triple union workers' cost for coverage. Workers currently pay between \$1100 and \$1500 a year.

Bargaining continued while Communications Workers (CWA) members kept working after their contract expired April 4. Talks with the company, which booked a \$12.9 billion profit last year, have slowed to a crawl.

The company has refused to bargain over health care for retirees, and CWA expects it to try unilaterally to hike their costs.

"They told us they could sweeten the pot if we got rid of the retirees," said Bill Henderson, Local 1298 president. "We're not going to put these people under the bus. This is not a fight for just us. This is a fight for the auto workers, for the Teamsters. For everyone that has a job."

Bargaining is occurring simultaneously at five locations around the country. According to one bargaining report, AT&T's wage offer was 6 percent over five years.

From there, the members made their way to the appointments. However, before the day ended, the United Steelworkers held a press conference about the Buy American provision for any stimulus monies spent.

"We've always had a philosophy back home, and as most of you know I grew up in the house of Congressman Charlie Wilson. I was told to buy with your friends, you buy local; you buy in your state and you buy American," said speaker Senator Jason Wilson.

"The idea is to stimulate the economy in the United States," said Billy Boyce, sub-district director for the United Steelworkers. "It's not about stimulating the economy in China, Russia or Mexico or anyplace else. It's for the United States."

"A Local 4009 member was unjustly written-up for what could have been considered a tiny infraction of safety rules: The heel on his boot was not exactly the right height! That's right, AT&T management is getting so frustrated and so petty that they actually attempted to write someone up for such a small safety infraction," said the District 4 Bargaining Update.

The company is also demanding a catch-all service technician position, and outraged members by floating a proposal that would force them to work alone in utility holes.

CWA is protesting AT&T's takeaway demands with a nationwide mobilization of rallies, workplace events, and a work-to-rule campaign that asks members to "comply with all rules and procedures the company has ever taught you."



*CWA members rallied for support in Muskingum County*

# Labor Stands Strong For Our Democratic Process

**Submitted by: Tim Burga and Amanda Haseley**

The Ohio AFL-CIO, OEA and UAW triumphed on April 14th in a legal battle over House Bill 694, which sought to limit Labor's voice in the electoral process. The 10th District Court of Appeals upheld the lower courts decision two and a half years after the Ohio General Assembly modified campaign finance law in light of Republican "pay to play" scandals.

House Bill 694 was passed after the November 2006 elections, signed by Governor Taft and went into effect on April 4, 2007. Instead of



focusing solely on the problem the Republican legislature included a provision in the bill to treat unions that have collective bargaining agreements with government entities like business contractors and place restrictions on campaign contributions.

Shortly after implementation of the law the lower court ruled that procedural flaws rendered H.B. 694 void at which time the case was appealed to the 10th District. The opinion of the Appeals court found that

H.B. 694 was not properly concurred to and signed by the House, Senate and Governor. The Ohio AFL-CIO is waiting to hear whether the 10th District ruling will be appealed to the Ohio Supreme Court.

# CBTU Holds 'A New Way Forward' Conference

The Cleveland Chapter of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) held *A New Way Forward Conference of African American Labor Leaders* on March 7, 2009.

Attendees were welcomed by Marian Garth Saffon, Cleveland CBTU President and Clinton Hall, Mayor of Warrensville Heights. Eleventh District Congresswoman Marcia Fudge enlightened



*11th District Congresswoman  
Marcia Fudge*

attending labor leaders on the Economic Recovery Plan. Attorney Ken Lumpkin took time to talk with leaders in attendance on the history of the housing crisis and encouraged them to take information back to share with their membership on methods for saving their homes.

Director Cindy Marizette was there to explain the UCIP-ASAP (Union Construction Industry Partnership and Apprenticeship Skills Achievement Program).

Afterwards, those in attendance had a chance to win a prize as they guessed who's who on black labor trivia. Information on the Employee Free Choice Act was included in the packet.

# Buy American Effort Gaining Traction Across The Country

**Submitted by: Amanda Haseley**

The United Steelworkers (USW), in conjunction with the Ohio AFL-CIO, many union partners and the Alliance for American Manufacturing have been traveling throughout the cities and counties of Ohio to gain support for the Buy American Resolution, committing to use stimulus funds only for the purchase of U.S. products and services.

The \$787 billion Economic Recovery Act signed by President Obama on February 17th includes a Buy American provision requiring that any public works project funded with stimulus dollars use only iron, steel and other manufactured goods produced in the U.S. This provision was added to the stimulus bill in order to ensure that tax dollars are used at home to maximize their economic impact and to stem layoffs in America's manufacturing and construction industries.

The USW hosted a press conference April 23 during the lobbying day of the Ohio AFL-CIO. The press conference included Central Ohio ALF President Billy Boyce, United Steelworkers District 1 staff representative Don Blatt, Central Ohio CLC President Dave Caldwell and Ohio AFL-CIO President Joe Rugola.

"We need this," said Blatt. "This is what's going to put our people back to work. We need to

make sure that these monies are spent as much as possible in the United States."

A recent University of Massachusetts study found that infrastructure investment could create up to 18,000 jobs for every \$1 billion invested. The Recovery Act provides for about \$48 billion in transportation projects and \$30 billion in other infrastructure improvements.

The Buy American clause must be applied consistent with U.S. international agreements and can be waived if it's in the public interest to do so or if it would result in an increase in project cost of more than 25 percent.

The resolution calls on our local and state governments to:

- Maximize the creation of American jobs and restore economic growth and opportunity by spending economic recovery plan funds on products and services that both create jobs and help keep Americans employed;
- Commit to purchasing only products and services that are made or performed in the

United States of America whenever and wherever possible with any economic recovery monies provided by the American people;

- Commit to publish any requests to waive these procurement priorities so as to give American workers and producers the opportunity to identify and provide the American products and services



*John Vanover is shown here putting Obama signs together with his grandson*

The United Steelworkers are working on getting Buy American resolutions passed across the state of Ohio. John Vanover, USW Political Field Coordinator was

able to get Resolution 932 passed at the Montpelier Village Council meeting on April 13<sup>th</sup>. Vanover pointed out, "If every county uses its stimulus money to purchase American-made products and services, we could bring back 252,000 manufacturing jobs across the country." He went on to state, "We can protect 21,000 jobs in concrete and cement, 38,000 jobs in fabricated metals, 15,000 in rubber and plastics, and 19,000 jobs in Steel. We have many of these jobs right here in Montpelier."

*The Bryan Times* featured Vanover on its front-page edition and reported on his years of political activism, including the 44 labor-to-labor walks that he organized for the 2008 Presidential election. His next step is to get the same resolution passed in Defiance. --Submitted by: **Laura Harrison**

# Keeping Busy In The North Shore

**Submitted by: Les Wiley**

A standing room only crowd of Labor, Retiree, and Community Activists attended a rally on Health Care at Forest Hills Presbyterian Church in Cleveland Heights on April 17th, 2009. Senator Sherrod Brown was the featured speaker at this event sponsored by Health Care for America Now (HCAN).

A "Labor Economy Summit" was held at Cleveland State University on April 24th, 2009. It was an all day conference sponsored by Northeast Ohio Labor/Management groups. Local Labor Leaders from the USW and North Shore Federation were on the planning team. It was an example of how Labor and Management can work together towards Economic Development in this economy.

Jobs with Justice and the North Shore Federation teamed up on April 25th, 2009 for a walk in Lakewood in support of the Employee Free Choice Act. Twenty volunteers were joined by city councilwoman Nicky Antonio of Lakewood (who introduced a recently passed resolution in Lakewood on the Employee Free Choice Act) and

Representatives of Congressman Dennis Kucinich's office.

They went door to door to talk with residents, hand out leaflets, and gather petition signatures in order to broaden community support of the Employee Free Choice Act. Over 200 Signatures were gathered and then everyone returned for a picnic in Lakewood Park.

The North Shore Federation has completed the planning and has scheduled a Candidates school for every Monday evening this June. It will be held at the apprenticeship training center at LIUNA 310 in Cleveland. There will be Labor leaders, Elected Officials, and Community leaders making presentations to educate potential candidates on what they would face in running and what Union issues are in need of their support.

Lorain CLC had two events Worker's Memorial Day, April 28th, 2009. One at noon in Elyria and one at 5 PM in Lorain. Ashtabula CLC purchased Worker's Memorial Day posters and distributed them to their affiliated unions.

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## Buy American

Continued from page 4

that will maximize the success of our nation's economic recovery program.

With the help of labor leaders and local unions, members have introduced more than 1,000 resolutions across the country and are working hard every day to ensure U.S. tax dollars are kept at home to create good jobs at home. So far, more than 400 "Buy American" resolutions have been passed.

If you are interested in learning more, visit [www.makeourfuturework.org](http://www.makeourfuturework.org)



*Vonnie Long is the rapid response congressional coordinator. Vonnie brought his daughter to the State Capitol for the announcement of the Buy American Resolution passed by the House of Representatives.*

# April 28 Workers Memorial Day

Submitted by: **Jeanette Mauk**

In a world where on occasion, death, injury, and illness at work are hidden away and taken for granted, Worker's Memorial Day is an opportunity to highlight the preventable nature of most workplace accidents and ill health and to



*Ohio Lieutenant Governor Lee Fisher speaks at the Dayton CLC meeting.*

promote campaigns and union organization in the fight for improvements in workplace safety. The unions of the AFL-CIO remember these workers on April 28<sup>th</sup>, "Worker's Memorial Day". The slogan for the day is "Fight for the dead-Fight for the living!"

The first Worker's Memorial Day was observed April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1989, and was chosen because it is the anniversary of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the day of a similar remembrance in Canada. Every year people in hundreds of

communities and at Worksites recognize worker's who have been killed or injured on the job. Trade unionist around the world now mark April 28<sup>th</sup> as an International Day of Mourning. Although April 28<sup>th</sup> is used as the focal point for the day of remembrance and a day of International Solidarity campaigning and other related activities continue throughout the year.



*Members from the Cincinnati area gathered to recognize and say a prayer on Workers Memorial Day. Photo by: Jeanette Mauk*

Here in Ohio hundreds of our union Brothers and Sisters observed "Worker's Memorial Day" either at the workplace or at Memorial Events held in Central Labor Councils, union halls or Banquet Centers. We can all be proud of these observances and the dedication and hard work that go into these events that allow us to take time out of our usual work day to honor those that gave the ultimate sacrifice.

## *Workers Memorial Events Were Held All Over The State*

Submitted by: **Laura Harrison**

The Workers Memorial Day events across Northwest Ohio were a huge success this year. On April 21, the West Central Labor Council joined with the United Way to host their first annual Workers Memorial Day dinner at the Girl Scout's Center in Lima. Labor Liaison, Tom Thompson, spoke about the importance of OSHA and the union's role in keeping workers safe on the job, but stressed that the work must continue. "The amount of deaths each year does keep diminishing, but the list does not include people who are exposed to dangerous chemicals and



*George Tucker addresses the crowd during Workers Memorial Day.*

those who pass away later in life due to a hazardous workplace," said Thompson. George Shafer, President of the West Central Labor Council incorporated the Employee Free Choice Act in his remarks. "If we can get workers organized, it will strengthen OSHA and workplace safety laws. Together we can make a difference," he stated.

The Toledo Area AFL-CIO also participated in an event to remember those who have been killed on the job. The United Labor Committee hosted the event. Mark Buford, Red Cross Labor

# Memorial

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Tom Thompson talks about the history of the union and workplace safety

Liaison, said “Our safety laws must be stronger and more strictly enforced and there must be stronger penalties for employees who violate the law.” The Mayor and the City of Toledo, The Lucas County Commissioners, the

Toledo City Council, and the Ohio House of Representatives gave proclamations honoring Workers Memorial Day. Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur provided a video in which she praised labor in their efforts to fight for workplace safety and expressed hope that the new White House Administration will fight for their cause. George Tucker, Chairman of the United Labor Committee and Executive Secretary of the Toledo Area AFL-CIO was the keynote speaker.

President Tucker spoke about the importance of passing the Employee Free Choice Act to our labor laws. “We have the opportunity to return the country

to its rightful owners, and to make sure that workers’ voices are heard and to make the economy work for all. We must start by giving all workers the right to form and join a union by making the Employee Free Choice Act the law of the land. With a union, workers can raise job safety concerns without the fear of employer retaliation, and make jobs safer,” Tucker asserted.



Family members of a worker who died on the job attend a Workers Memorial Day event in Mansfield.

Crawford-Richland CLC President Ron Davis and North Central CLC President Lynda Mobley held a joint event in Mansfield, which was attended by Mansfield Mayor Curtis W. McCoy as well as several city councilpersons and county commissioners. Also in attendance were family members of a USW member who passed away on the job several years ago, and many union sisters and brothers. “Although we are glad to see the numbers of those being injured or killed on the job declining, we still need to stay focused in trying to keep those numbers declining,” said President Davis. “Even one death on the job is too many.”

## Ohio AFL-CIO and Stimulus Funds for Ohio

**Submitted by: Marcia Tolles**

On April 9th the Ohio AFL-CIO Labor Lobbyists Committee and several Labor Representatives from local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) began a process to familiarize themselves with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and to identify ways that they would be able to assist in the effective implementation of this Act in Ohio. They were joined via conference call by Jeff Rickert from the national office of the AFL-CIO.

This Act presents a substantial opportunity for the State to work towards lowering its unemployment rate and improving services for its residents.

Approximately \$146 million is earmarked for programs that provide services to unemployed people including dislocated workers. Local WIBs will have

some flexibility to determine spending priorities. Expanded funding is designed to help people enter or re-enter the workforce as soon as possible. Funds will be available for job-seeking assistance, training, and supportive services.

In addition, the Recovery Act includes stimulus funds for many other purposes. These include, but are not limited to, road construction; assistance with health insurance through subsidized payments; housing weatherization; rural water and waste disposal projects; school capital projects; and crime prevention.

An important challenge is to effectively utilize these funds as quickly as possible so that there is an immediate and positive impact on people’s financial status. It is anticipated that when these funds are used, they will provide a multiplier affect for their communities.

# Commentary from the Officers:

**Submitted by: Norm Wernet**

May is Older Americans month. The Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans takes note that the men and women now retired brought us modern health care and pioneered the concept of employer-sponsored health insurance through contract negotiations. Those seniors and retirees who established access to health care for most American workers also bargained for and won access to healthcare as we age beyond our working years. Medicare and Medicaid are those national **public** health insurance plans.

The Older Americans Month of May is perfectly timed to focus on the issues of healthcare reform as a national priority as Congress begins its work. During May the Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans and its affiliates are engaged in a petition drive to restore and improve Medicare.

The Alliance wants Congress to: Create a prescription drug within the original Medicare program; Require Medicare to negotiate drug prices; End the overpayments to private "Medicare Advantage" plans; Eliminate the "premium support" voucher experiment that is due to start in 2010; End the new higher-income premiums now being phased in for Part B; Launch a congressional study of Medicare's long-term finances.

Further the ARA wants a buy-in to Medicare established for those over 55 but not yet 65. Many who are forced to retire early or who are permanently out of work cannot get private insurance because they are viewed as too large a risk, have pre-existing conditions, or are priced out of their means.

National health care reform is a must and the Ohio Alliance along with its affiliates will express our concerns to members of Congress during the Memorial Day recess and on Capitol Hill during the Alliance for Retired Americans Legislative Conference June 15-18.

The Ohio Alliance in its April convention expressed its concern to the Ohio House of Representatives that



the Ohio Medicaid insurance program is headed in the wrong direction. Governor Strickland proposed placing an emphasis on the more cost effective community based care but the legislature shifted funding to more expensive nursing home and institutional long-term care.

The shift of monies recently passed raises the question "Are we really concerned about bringing the cost of healthcare under control?". With 800 men and women ready to move back in the community who are inappropriately placed in nursing homes at an average cost of \$55,000 per year per patient, Ohio would save greatly given the community based cost of \$14,000. There are 13,000 men and women who ought to be evaluated for placement back in the community at lower care costs according to the Ohio Department of Aging.

Unless the Ohio Senate acts to do justice, Ohio seniors and retirees will lose access to community based care services because the state will not meet its federal maintenance of effort to buy those dollars we fought for and won. The OARA is exploring advocacy options to use Ohio's Medicaid dollars and tax revenues more wisely.

The Ohio ARA launched its Older Americans Month with a public forum in Toledo on Monday April 27 featuring Senator Sherrod Brown. Senator Brown spoke to the need for a public health insurance plan as part of health care reform. The Ohio ARA will bookend the month with forums in Niles at the Eastwood Mall on June 3<sup>rd</sup> and Columbus on June 5<sup>th</sup> at the UAW 969 Hall.

Petitions to Save and Restore Medicare can be obtained from OARA affiliate leadership in your Central Labor Council area or by calling Norm Wernet at 614.224.8271 x1004.

**David Friesner, President**  
**Sally Steagall, Treasurer**  
**Sam Burnett, Secretary**

# New Grants Help Union Members Save for College

**Submitted by: Kathleen Kelly**

With the economy in a seemingly endless free fall, the rising cost of a college education is putting working families in a bind.



However, if you open a new college savings account, your union may be able to help.

The new Union Plus College Savings

Grant offers \$500 to qualified union members who open a new tax-free "529" college savings or prepaid tuition plan by July 31, 2009. You are eligible for the \$500 grant if you have had a Union Plus Credit Card, Mortgage or UnionSecure Insurance policy for one year and contribute at least \$1,000 dollars in the account by Nov. 30, 2009.

Members with a previously opened education savings accounts are not eligible to apply for a grant.

The 529 savings plan is one of several savings programs that can help you afford a college education, which is becoming more and more important in our information-fueled economy (see accompanying box).

The 529 plans, operated by each individual state, encourage people to save for future college costs. The Union Plus College Savings Grant underscores the importance that unions place in higher education.

The college grant is part of a \$3 million initiative introduced this year by Union Plus to assist union members facing financial hardship during the current recession. The program – called Union SAFE, for Security, Assistance and Financial Education – provides a wide array of benefits for qualifying members – from financial counseling to help with hospital payments to job loss protection to help avoiding foreclosure.

For more information or an application, please visit [UnionPlus.org/CollegeSavings](http://UnionPlus.org/CollegeSavings). Union members and leaders in Ohio may also contact their Union Plus benefits representative, Kathleen Kelly, for more information on the Union Plus benefits at 330-255-2727.

## College Saving Tips

Education is an investment in a career and helps to increase future earning potential. With the cost of education increasing by nearly 6 percent each year, financing that investment can be overwhelming. But with careful planning you'll be well on your way to affording that education. Start your plan now by looking into these resources:

- Qualifying union members may be able to get a \$500 grant by opening a 529 college savings account created this year through Union Plus;
- Consider a state prepaid tuition account to lock in current tuition prices and avoid future inflation;
- Put away \$2,000 each year and use the money, tax-free, to pay for college expenses with a Coverdell Education Savings Accounts (ESAs);
- Learn what the benefits of Roth IRA plans are. As long as you only withdraw contributions and not earnings, you can pay for college expenses without having to pay income tax or an early withdrawal fee;
- Research all available grants and scholarships, including federal Pell Grants aimed at assisting low-income families;
- As a union member, you also may be eligible for special union scholarships, including the Union Plus Scholarship Program.

Visit [UnionPlus.org/Education](http://UnionPlus.org/Education) for more information on ways to save money for higher education.

Mark Your Calendar



For Registration and Sponsorship details contact Amanda Sabol at 614-224-8271

FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 2009

THE OHIO AFL-CIO

ANNUAL GOLF OUTING @  
WILLOW RUN in PATASKALA, OHIO

Registration @ 9:00 a.m.

Shot Gun Start @ 10:00 a.m.

# AFL-CIO and Working America Offer Lifeline to America's Unemployed

**Submitted by: Dan Heck**

The AFL-CIO and Working America launched an online Unemployment LifeLine campaign to give America's unemployed workers more resources. The project was a collaboration between Working America and the rest of the AFL-CIO, with community services playing an important leading role.

"To stay afloat, people who are out of work need a lifeline to keep them connected to their communities and economic services," said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney.

"UnemploymentLifeLine.com" corrals resources for people when they and their families need them the most."

UnemploymentLifeLine.com is an online lifeline—a Yellow Pages meets Wikipedia—for unemployed workers. On the site, people can enter their zip code and see a listing of available resources for workers in their area; such as where to go for unemployment insurance, nutritional assistance, heating subsidies,

credit counseling, job training programs and much more.

The AFL-CIO and Working America, the 2.5 million-member community affiliate of the AFL-CIO, have created and presented the largest set of data on resources for unemployed workers currently available. The groups say it is about helping families find the information and support they need to ride out the worst recession in decades. In addition, Working America

canvassers are talking to unemployed workers around Ohio about the issues that matter to them and getting information into their hands.

Scott Sneddon, Working America's canvass director in Columbus, was quoted explaining additional features of the website in the Columbus Dispatch on April 7th: "People can communicate with each other to offer advice, how to talk with children about a job loss, or even how to talk with creditors about a late bill," he said. "The site helps to give a voice back to people who have lost their jobs and feel as though their voices are no longer being heard."



## Unemployment LifeLine

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