

## Historic Convention Elects New Leadership Team

**Submitted by: Jason Perlman**

Although nothing in life is a guarantee, it was just about inevitable that Richard Trumka was going to be elected as the next President of the AFL-CIO. Trumka and his team of Arlene Holt-Baker (Executive Vice-President) and Liz Shuler (Secretary-Treasurer) were receiving endorsements from various labor organizations up until the AFL-CIO Convention held Sept. 14-17 in Pittsburgh, PA. However it was the Ohio AFL-CIO that gave Trumka and his team his first endorsement when it made its official announcement on June 2, 2009.

“Those of us who know Rich believe that he is the clear choice to lead the American labor movement through these most difficult times,” said Ohio AFL-CIO President Joe Rugola.

“Rich is the most articulate and passionate voice for the middle class and working families in the country today. That is why our Ohio executive board’s endorsement was both unanimous and enthusiastic.”

Trumka, who previously served as AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer accepted his title with the fire and determination that has helped propel him to the leader of the largest labor organization in America.

“Even though the face of the American labor movement has changed, one thing hasn’t: It’s that the surest, the fastest, most effective way to lift workers and our families into the middle-class is with the strength, that can only, only come with a union contract,” Trumka said to the over thousand delegates at the convention. “And, sisters and brothers, that fundamental truth hasn’t been more critical to the future of this country than it is right now because, today, the American middle-class isn’t being squeezed—we are being crushed. The mirage of prosperity through borrowed money has dissolved—and now we’re left with the reality of a



*At the AFL-CIO Convention in Pittsburgh. Left to Right. Joe Crytser (Ross Highland CLC), Austin Keyser (Shawnee CLC), Tim Burga (Ohio AFL-CIO), Bill Padisak (Mahoning-Trumbull CLC), John Wagner (Akron Tri-County CLC) and Dan Sciury (Hall of Fame CLC).*

hollowed-out economy and a broken financial system.”

Trumka went on to say, “Even though it wasn’t the labor movement that got us into this mess, we are the people who are going to lead America out of it. But we can only do it if we seize this moment—we can only do it if we act now—we can only do it if we provide the leadership working Americans are demanding.”

Shuler, formerly the executive assistant to Electrical Workers (IBEW) President Edwin Hill committed to being fiscally responsible while making a promise to help reach out to the younger generation to promote the benefits of the union.

“We need to revitalize and unify labor at every level. We need to reach out to unorganized workers—especially those under 35—who, for whatever reason, don’t see us as the answer to the economic problems they face,” Shuler said in her speech. “We know what

## New Team

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*Bill Burke/Page One*

*Former AFL-CIO President John Sweeney (right) and new President Rich Trumka share in labor's celebration.*

young people are capable of—we worked side by side with them last year in a political campaign to make real change happen. We watched them organize and spread a message of hope to the American people, and we've got to build on those bonds of solidarity that were forged in the heat of the campaign."

Holt-Baker will use her new post to help pass the Employee Free Choice Act in a timely manner to ensure every American has the chance to live out the American Dream for themselves and their family.

"We're not just concerned about labor's family. Our fight is really about ensuring life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all families. As we engage that pursuit, our themes may change, but our mission remains steadfast," said Holt-Baker. "I believe with every fiber in my body that our movement must keep on ensuring that millions of workers in this country have the dignity and respect they deserve. That means good wages, decent pensions, affordable health care and continuous job training. If we don't fight for these securities, who will? The current system is broken. So together we've got to fight to fix it like our lives depended on it. Because they do."

President Barack Obama also visited the convention to talk about health care and the important role labor is playing in helping make health care a right, not a privilege.

"Few have fought for this cause harder, and few have championed it longer than you...you know why this is

so important. You know this isn't just about the millions of Americans who don't have health insurance, it's about the hundreds of millions more who do: Americans who worry that they'll lose their insurance if they lose their job, who fear their coverage will be denied because of a pre-existing condition, who know that one accident or illness could mean financial ruin," said Obama. "When are we going to stop this? When are we going to say enough is enough? How many more workers have to lose their coverage? How many more families have to go into the red for a sick loved one? We have talked this issue to death year after year, decade after decade...now is the time for action. Now is the time to deliver on health insurance reform."

Although health care is on the forefront of Obama's administration, he did not fail to mention the Employee Free Choice Act. "When hard workers succeeds—that's when labor succeeds. When labor succeeds—that's when our middle class succeeds. And when our middle class succeeds—that's when the United States of America succeeds."

"The Convention was truly a historic event for Organized Labor. I was honored to be a part of the Ohio delegation and I was proud to cast the vote of Shawnee District Council for the Trumka, Shuler and Holt-Baker ticket," said Austin Keyser, Business Manager with IBEW Local 575 and Secretary Treasurer of the Shawnee Central Labor Council.



*President Barack Obama greets members of labor from around the country before he addresses the thousands in attendance of the 2009 AFL-CIO Convention in Pittsburgh, PA on September 15. Before making his appearance, President Obama visited a General Motors plant in Lordstown, OH where Chevy Cobalts are produced.*

# Labor and Communities Join Together This Labor Day

## ASHLAND

Submitted by: Bryon Bell



*Congressman John Boccieri (D OH-16) stands with Lee Geisse of USW Local 1046 after finishing the route of the Labor Day Parade.*

Ashland County, Ohio might not be a place that comes easily to mind as a stronghold of American Labor, but every Labor Day the Central Labor Council, under the leadership of President Barb Phillips, leads the community in celebrating the work that built this community.

Every year on the Saturday before Labor Day, the Council holds a recognition breakfast, presenting the Crain-Ellison Award to a

local activist or leader who has made an impact in moving Labor forward in the Ashland, Wayne, and Holmes County area. This year, however, the Labor Council chose to recognize all the union members and retirees in the area as recipients of the award – presenting each local union within it's three-county jurisdiction with a plaque honoring their efforts and commitment to strengthen the Labor Movement.

Ohio AFL-CIO President Joe Rugola was the keynote speaker at the breakfast, thanking those in attendance for their efforts in representing Organized Labor, and provided updates on current struggles facing working people.

On Labor Day morning, a car show was held in conjunction with the Central Classic County Chevy Club. But the highlight of the day was the annual Labor Day Parade, also hosted by the Labor Council. Over 60 entrants followed the route through downtown Ashland, lead by Grand Marshal Glenn Ellison, former International Secretary Treasurer of the United Rubber Workers. Congressman John Boccieri (D OH-16) visibly demonstrated that he stands with Organized Labor by marching in the parade and speaking with area labor leaders and activists afterwards.

## NORTH SHORE

Submitted by: David Schulz

The North Shore AFL-CIO Labor Parade, held Saturday, September 5th in Brook Park this year, featured State Treasurer Kevin Boyce and U.S. Congressman Dennis Kucinich as Grand Marshals. The parade stepped off to the stately hum of the 87th Brigade Bagpipe Band, under the capable direction of Uncle Ned Wiley, and accompanied a color guard followed by Mayor Mark Elliot and members of Brook Park City Council and a host of local and state political luminaries and union members.

In attendance were 11th District Congresswoman Marcia Fudge, Attorney General Richard Cordray, Candidate for State Auditor David Pepper, Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner, Mike Foley and Cuyahoga County Commissioner Peter Lawson Jones. Among unions showing their marching colors with flags,

banners and floats were Teamsters Local 407, UAW Local 1250, Plumbers Local 55, Cleveland Teachers Union Local 279 and the Airline Pilots' Association along with numerous others. Bolstering the carnival atmosphere, local high school bands provided spirited marching music to accompany pageant.

The parade and festival in Brook Park was the second to be held there since the Labor Federation began rotating the event around Cuyahoga County. Previous parades have been held in blue-collar suburbs such as Euclid, Garfield Heights, Lakewood, Parma and North Olmstead.

Post-parade activities included a family-oriented festival with food, entertainment with bands, clowns and face-painters along with spirited speeches. North Shore Executive Secretary Harriet Applegate encouraged the crowd to help Pepper win his potentially difficult race. Pepper hails from the traditionally GOP-dominated Hamilton County.



*President Barack Obama is introduced by Charlie Dilbert at the AFL-CIO Labor Day picnic.*

## CINCINNATI

Submitted by: Jason Perlman

"It was labor that helped build the largest middle class in history. So, even if you're not a union member, every American owes something to America's labor

movement," said President Barack Obama at the Cincinnati Labor Day picnic at Coney Island, whose run for the presidency was energized in no small part by unions.

"We remember that the rights and benefits we enjoy today were not simply handed out to America's working men and women. They had to be won," he said. "They had to be fought for, by men and women of courage and conviction, from the factory floors of the Industrial Revolution to the shopping aisles of today's superstores. They stood up and spoke out to demand a fair shake, an honest day's pay for an honest day's work," Obama said.

President Barack Obama, who was introduced by Laborers' Charlie Dilbert and joined by Ohio AFL-CIO President Joe Rugola on the stage, declared in Cincinnati this Labor Day that modern benefits such as paid leave, minimum wage and Social Security "all bear the union label," as he appealed to organized labor to help him win the health-care fight in Congress. "We have never been this close," Obama said. "We have never had this broad an agreement on what needs to be done."

Senator Sherrod Brown echoed those remarks. "Our workers are the backbone of our country. I am honored to stand with the hard working men and women of Ohio as we celebrate them and their invaluable contributions to building our nation. Now,

# Labor Day

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more than ever, we must do all we can to ensure that Americans workers have the support necessary to help us transition to a 21st Century economy. From establishing a national manufacturing policy, to re-prioritizing our trade agenda, to passing health insurance reform, it is time for policies in Washington that put American workers first. I look forward to continuing to work with the Obama administration in ensuring that we invest in our nation's workforce, the key to a thriving middle class and a secure economy."



Ohio AFL-CIO President Joe Rugola speaks to several thousand at the Cincinnati Labor Day Picnic.

Also attending the nation's largest Labor Day picnic was Labor Secretary Hilda Solis, then AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, newly-elected AFL-CIO President (then AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer) Richard Trumka, Congressman Steve Driehaus, Cincinnati Mayor Mark Mallory, and other elected officials.

## TOLEDO

Submitted by: Laura Harrison



IBEW march in the parade.

The Toledo Labor Day Parade was great this year. Over 75 unions participated in the Parade and thousands of others came out to watch. Fran Darcy was the 2009 Grand Marshall. In 1973, she was hired by H.E.R.E. Local 84 as the first female

Business Agent in Toledo. Fran then retired from her local in 1989 as Vice President. Since then, she has been active with the AFL-CIO and the Democratic Party and was awarded the Volunteer of The Year.

Also in attendance were several politicians, including five mayoral candidates searching for votes. "I'd never seen so many politicians at the reviewing stand. It was unbelievable," said John Boellner, local political action chairman of the National Association of Letter Carriers union and chairman of the parade. "You can really tell it's a heated primary."



Plumbers & Pipefitters march in the parade.

Rose Barkhimer, 44, and her husband Dan, 43, an electrician, of Monclova Township, took up a spot at the start of the parade. "We march every year," Mrs. Barkhimer said. "We usually jump ahead so the kids can grab some candy." Added Mr. Barkhimer, "I try to support labor and a good way of life."

## LORAIN

Submitted by:  
Jason Perlman

The message from those speaking at the Lorain Labor Day Festival was one of hope. Too often, our headlines are negative and fearful, but Congresswoman Betty Sutton had a different message to the nearly 28,000 folks in attendance.



Ohio AFL-CIO President Joe Rugola speaks to the thousands gathered at the Lorain Labor Day celebration.

"Labor not only built our community, but labor built our middle class and for that we are eternally grateful," Sutton said. "Things are looking up in Lorain, and don't let anyone tell you different. We want you to be secure in pensions and health care and we're going to get there for you." For many in attendance this day was more than a celebration of labor but a celebration of family, friends and community with dozens of activities for families and children.

Joe Thayer, President of the Lorain County AFL-CIO and Kevin Zacovic, co-chairman of the planning committee and President of the Lorain Educational Association agreed the festival brought more people out than any of the previous celebrations.

"A lot of volunteers from local unions helped us run this, and it went flawlessly because of them," Zacovic said. "It was a really nice day and everyone seemed to have fun."

More than 28,000 people that attended this year's festival at the Black River Landing where music, food, carnival rides, children's activities and political speeches were offered. Also attending the event which had more than \$8,000 in raffle prizes was Lorain Mayor Anthony Krasienko; Roy Church, president of Lorain County Community College; Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray; Ohio Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner; and Joseph Rugola, president of the Ohio AFL-CIO.

## MARIETTA

Submitted by: Kathleen Nye



The Marietta Labor Day Parade was held Saturday, September 5. Once again, organized labor was well represented with members & their families from the Electricians, Plumbers & Pipefitters, Ironworkers, Bricklayers, Laborers, Carpenters & Teachers marching in the parade.

Union members also showed strong support for the Marietta City Schools Bond Issue by displaying signs & balloons on their floats & wearing t-shirts. Special thanks goes to the Southeast Ohio Area Labor Federation for providing breakfast sandwiches & beverages to union members & their families.

# Newly Elected Leaders Visit Ohio First

**Submitted by: Jason Perlman**

After this historic election of Rich Trumka as President of the AFL-CIO, Arlene Holt-Baker as Executive Vice-President and Liz Shuler as Secretary-Treasurer, The Great Lakes Science Center in Cleveland was the first public appearance stop by the team of leaders to propel the labor movement in this new century.

At just after 12 noon, the new leadership team along with Ohio AFL-CIO President Joe Rugola, North Shore CLC Executive Secretary Harriet Applegate and Congressman Dennis Kucinich took to the small stage facing the Science Center with a wind turbine spinning in the background.

“We are proud as a state of labor to welcome this team to Ohio,” said Ohio AFL-CIO President Joe Rugola to the crowd of hundreds of activists “It was a great day for the labor movement to have a rank-and-file mine worker from a small town in Pennsylvania to lead the resurgence of this great movement.”

It was Holt-Baker who took the microphone first and reiterated her dedication to not just passing real health insurance reform, but got the crowd fired up with her commitment to the passage of the Employee Free Choice Act.

“Ohio as been Ground Zero in the political fight for many years, and I’ve been pounding the pavement and beating the Bushes – literally – trying to get every vote we can for progressive candidates,” said Holt-Baker. “My background is as a political organizer, out of AFSCME in California. But I’ve been working on political campaigns for the AFL-CIO for 14 years. And on our campaign to ensure a Voice@Work, which goes hand in hand with our political work – democracy in our communities and democracy at work. Sisters and brothers, we need the Employee Free Choice Act. Workers must be free to choose a union if they want one ... we must have labor law reform ... we’re going to fight for the Employee Free Choice Act.”

Shuler focused her remarks on reaching out to the younger generation to talk about the importance of a strong labor movement in today’s work environment and why it is more important than ever to have a strong voice at the workplace.



*Newly-elected AFL-CIO President Rich Trumka (blue jacket) and Ohio AFL-CIO President Joe Rugola (green jacket) greet labor activists and leaders in Cleveland.*

“For young people today, the question, ‘What are you going to do with your life?’ is daunting enough, but this economy makes it even more difficult to answer. You worked hard to get through school, and now you can’t find a job. Or you were laid off from your job and haven’t been able to find a new one. There’s no training available. You can’t afford health care, so you don’t go to the doctor when you need. It may be your story, or your friend’s story, or a friend of a friend’s story. But it’s time for that story to change,” said Shuler.

“Some young people might think of labor unions as part of your grandparent’s generation. But we are for all ages, and for all workers—full time, part-time, freelancers, professionals and skilled labor jobs alike,” Shuler continued. “At the end of the day, we all want the same things. We want a piece of the American dream. The labor movement has been the key to the middle class for 60 years, and it still offers the hand you need to succeed.”

It was then the newly elected President’s turn at the podium, and his message of hope and strength for workers resonated through the crowd.

We came straight to Ohio from our convention because so many working families are hurting

## Visit

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here. You are a microcosm of our nation a true political barometer. Ohio has been especially hard hit with 11.2 percent unemployment, among the highest in the nation. But behind the numbers is the very sad situation in which entire communities have been wiped out like right here in Cleveland in Slavic Village and other communities hit hard by the foreclosure crisis,” Trumka said with his usual passion and conviction.

“Our entire state, once a proud industrial center, has also borne the brunt of the corporate desertion to foreign shores from Cleveland to Dayton from Warren to Wilmington. You could say the same thing at Warren and the Severstal steel mill that has been shuttered since last October, leaving a thousand workers idled. Severstal is Russian-owned and Germans own DHL and there’s nothing wrong with that. We support multinational companies investing in American communities. We want jobs! The labor movement will do everything in its power to help create good jobs; that’s our most important goal. But when you buy into a community, you become part of the family you have an obligation. Too many corporations today want to walk away from their communities; even companies that were nurtured right here in these same communities. That’s the real tragedy of globalization that corporations have lost



*With the American flag blowing in the background, newly elected AFL-CIO President speaks to the crowd of labor and progressives about labor’s part in the American Dream and rebuilding the middle class.*

their sense of community they’ve turned their backs on America.”

Trumka went on to not just talk about problems, but also address possible solutions to what he and most of labor sees as America’s problems economically and socially.

“In an economy that works for working families the government also has an important role to regulate public trusts particularly the financial system. That’s what has brought Ohio’s families to this low economic point brothers and sisters. It is our global financial system so shot up with corruption and greed and now public money. The situation we’re in right now with families being thrown out of their homes; lost jobs; shattered lives. We need this administration to rectify the damage done by the Bush-Paulson Wall Street bailout. Unfortunately that beat goes on Goldman Sachs is getting ready to dole out \$700 million in bonuses to its Wall Street elite. And working families are being thrown out on the street,” said Trumka.

“We will not accept this disgraceful imbalance between the rich and the rest of us. It’s an assault on any sense of fairness. This is not our America. We need an economic system in this country that rewards work as well as it rewards investment. We need an economic system that gives everybody a fair opportunity to work hard and succeed. We need an economic system that encourages and empowers collective bargaining and union representation. Yes sisters and brothers our nation must change. And the passage of the Employee Free Choice Act would be the best change we could have. It’s about time we had real choice in the workplace.”



*Joe Rugola speaks to the crowd in front of the Cleveland Science Center as (from left to right) Congressman Dennis Kucinich, North Shore AFL-CIO Executive Secretary Harriet Applegate, Liz Shuler and Rich Trumka ready to speak.*

# Sheet Metal Pounded Pavement For Employee Free Choice Act

For months, labor was making a hard push to pass the Employee Free Choice Act. There was a tremendous amount of work being accomplished across Ohio and the country in an effort to allow workers to have a fair shot at forming a union without the fear and illegal tactics of



*Sheet Metal Local 24 Business Manager & Financial Secretary/Treasurer Michael Moore at his office just outside of Dayton, Ohio.*

corporations. But before the hard work came to fruition, President Barack Obama and others started to fast-track the Health Insurance Reform efforts and it seemed as if the Employee Free Choice

top priority, and all staff at Local 24 and around the state devoted at least 60% of their time reaching out to the unorganized about a worker's right to organize. And perhaps no one knows more about that than Joe Bennington, a Marketing Representative and Organizer for Sheet Metal Local 24 who spent five days a week knocking on doors for those three months.

“As a labor organizer, my number one responsibility is to help workers who want to form or get union representation to be able to do so. In the present legal environment, it is difficult for people to form a union. In one week, I spoke with five people who had lost their jobs with different employers because they supported a union effort or expressed a desire to have union representation. The companies varied from manufacturing to service. Current laws are abused by companies and leave the workers hanging and we need to do something about it if we are to restore the middle class. Going door-to-door for the Employee Free Choice Act letter-writing campaign was at first an assignment by our Business Manager. After being on the streets and talking with people struggling to just get by, it also became my moral obligation as well as a necessity as an organizer,” said Bennington.

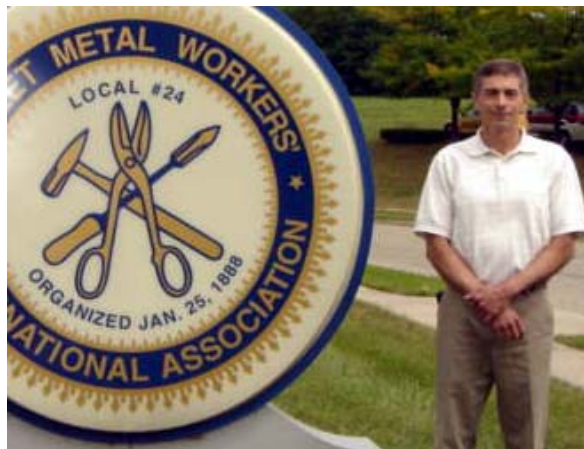
Act was left behind. But for Michael Moore, Business Manager and Financial Secretary/Treasurer for Sheet Metal Workers Local 24, health care only helps the efforts of the Employee Free Choice Act.

“I think the Employee Free Choice Act and health insurance reform is tied together. The passage of health reform helps because if health care passes, it will help us negotiate contracts because there is a known cost to health care. In the negotiation of a first contract, health insurance costs is always at the top of the list. But there is so much into negotiating health care. I am in negotiations now with seven production companies all with different plans and costs. These companies can provide a small wage increase and whack its contribution to health care or have no concessions to insurance and then have a wage freeze. It isn't always the company not wanting to provide for employees. Sometimes they just cannot afford to do both and if health insurance costs were affordable and predictable, it will make it easier to negotiate that contract,” said Moore.

For three months, Sheet Metal unions made reaching out in the community about the Employee Free Choice Act a

For Sheet Metal, the Employee Free Choice Act was nothing new. According to Moore, the International Staff of the union has been lobbying legislators in Washington, D.C. for years for “card check” and the Employee Free

Choice Act is just a culmination of the work of its staff and all the labor leaders fighting for workers' rights.



*Joe Bennington, an organizer at Local 24 of the Sheet Metal Workers, spent months knocking on doors in support of the Employee Free Choice Act.*

“We have been talking about the issue long before it became a national issue as a proposed bill. We have been talking about it for years, so we had some gears in motion on the national effort. Our international staff was already lobbying in Washington,” said Moore. “In Sheet Metal, we have two divisions. The Yellow Label which is building trades and the Blue Label which is manufacturing. We were gaining some ground in

Building trades sector with organizing, but at the same time we were losing on the blue side with companies like Carrier who moved out of the country.”

Currently, Sheet Metal may have an organized plant that makes a product that will be used in a prevailing wage job

## Sheet Metal

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or where contactors will use only union products, but a mirrored product is made in a non-union shop and sold for cheaper to non-union contractors.

"We need to make sure we bring up everybody. Passing the Employee Free Choice Act will also help the state and local tax base because it will help stop contractors from hiring out-of-state workers and 1099-ing them as independent contractors and having all that tax base leave our communities and our state," said Moore.

Although the Employee Free Choice Act seems like a no-brainer to those in labor, getting unorganized community members on board is what will make or break the bill and Bennington has been doing his part to educate those who are unfamiliar with the organizing process and benefits of a union.

"I spoke with people who had been making \$14-\$15/hr a few years ago. They lost those jobs or had their wages cut and are now making around \$10/hr and do not have health insurance. Some have seen that if they insist on fair compensation that they will be laid off and replaced. As hire-at-will employees without a contract, there is nothing

they can do about it. I spoke with a grocery store employee who never knows her work hours for the coming week until Sunday night. All employees are required to sign the schedule sheet every Sunday evening even if they are not working that day. Another employee with a Monday through Friday schedule in the light manufacturing industry describes a similar problem. The supervisor would tell them on Friday that they were needed Saturday and sometimes also on Sunday and they had to be there. For some, that isn't enough notice to find care for their kids and they have no choice but to leave them home alone. This is America, people should not be treated so poorly or forced to make those kinds of decisions," said Bennington.

As for the passing of the Employee Free Choice Act, newly elected Executive Vice President of the AFL-CIO Arlene Holt-Baker is making this a priority and Moore agrees something will be passed.

"I think something is going to happen, but I'm curious as to what it will be when it actually passes. We will have to see how much of the real meat is there or is it watered down. I think the Employee Free Choice Act and health care are tied together," Moore said. "But whatever passes will be better for the American worker and that is what the labor movement is all about."

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# Trumka, Holt-Baker and Shuler Hold Ohio Roundtables

## COLUMBUS

Submitted by: Amanda Sabol



Newly elected AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer Elizabeth Shuler addressed Ohio labor and community leaders during a

“roundtable” discussion at Columbus State Community College.

Secretary Treasurer Shuler listened to comments from the panel and assured them that the AFL-CIO will work to re-build America by seeking passage of the Employee Free Choice Act and real health care reform and will continue to advocate for career pathways, such as apprenticeship programs, for students and young adults.

Shuler said the new AFL-CIO leadership will explore ways to re-make the American labor movement and find new ways for the trade union movement to connect with the American public, especially the young generation.

“We were impressed and happy newly elected Secretary-Treasurer chose



Central Ohio to start the new day and new direction with the national AFL-CIO. I was impressed with what she had to say but even more impressed with the fact she wanted input with both local labor leaders and the general population about the new direction of the national AFL-CIO,” said Dave Caldwell, President of the Central Ohio Labor Council and Assistant to the Director for United Steelworkers District 1. “Also attending were students from The Ohio State University, Columbus State and apprentices from different building trades. Ms. Shuler was there to hear from and to receive feedback about how they could

work together to help the labor movement as a whole. It was great to see how open-minded this new leadership team is and how everyone has a role to play in rebuilding the American middle class.”

At the “roundtable” Tim Burga, Chief of Staff, Ohio AFL-CIO tells Secretary Treasurer Shuler, “ You can count on Labor in Ohio to have your back as we move together with a progressive agenda to re-build America —an agenda that focuses on reforms to strengthen our private sector economy. Working together to achieve global fair trade and harnessing the new energy economy for our workers we can again re-industrialize America, revitalize union building and construction and secure robust public budgets.”

## DAYTON

Submitted by: Jason Perlman

Willis E. Blackshear, Montgomery County recorder, was part of the roundtable discussion in Dayton with newly elected Executive Vice-President of the AFL-CIO, Arlene Holt-Baker and Ohio AFL-CIO Secretary/ Treasurer Petee Talley. Blackshear said he’s worked 25 years for the county and that what they’re seeing in terms of necessary cuts is unprecedented.



“This the first time in my 25 years we’re making cuts,” he said. He also shared foreclosure numbers with the group, relating that from Jan. 1, 2005, to December 2008, 11,943 people in Montgomery County lost their homes.

“People say, ‘We pay our taxes and expect certain services to be met,’ but they need to think about where they spend their money, when they do or are able to spend it. When you go to The Greene or

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# Roundtable

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Fairfield Commons, that money goes to Greene County,” he pointed out. “We need to start saying, ‘Buy Montgomery County.’ “

In attendance at Corinthian Baptist Church were over 50 community concerned citizens, all of which have something to offer the new leadership team of the AFL-CIO.

James Harper had a 35-year career as a welder/fabricator. Now, at 59, he is unemployed and looking for work. He gets unemployment but he and his wife, Deb, are struggling. She has high blood pressure and he said he has health issues, including two artificial knees. Harper’s been laid off for eight months. It’s his wife’s 20 to 25 hour a week, part-time job that’s keeping them afloat.

“I’ve been paying for medications with a credit card,” Harper said. “I’m running myself into debt. I’m too young for Medicare, too young to retire and too old to start over.”

Holt Baker said there must be a strong partnership between not just those the union represents, but all of America. “We’ve got to have good paying, green, sustainable jobs that don’t go offshore,” she said. We’ve got to pass health care reform in this country, Holt Baker said. “The wealthy seem to still get by and the rest of us aren’t making it. Now the middle class and poor are in the same boat, but that 1 percent is still floating in the yacht.”

## YOUNGSTOWN

*Submitted by: Bryon Bell*

One day after being elected to replace John Sweeny as President of the National AFL-CIO, Mineworker Richard Trumka visited the Mahoning Valley to stand with the working men and women who are on the front-lines of the struggle against this economic downturn.

Stopping in Warren, President Trumka addressed a crowd of over 150 in front of the idled Severstal steel facility. After a sharp decline in business earlier this year, most of the mill’s 1,100 hourly workers, members of United Steelworkers Local 1375, were laid off with no set date to return to work.

Trumka delivered a message of hope to the gathered workers, assuring them that American Labor has a bright future, and “Together, we are going to create an economy that works for everyone.”



Citing recent tariffs on imported tires to protect the US rubber industry as a positive sign, Trumka, who meets with President Obama regularly as part of a labor advisory board, said, “President Obama is on board,” but told those gathered that labor has a duty to press it’s interests and demand a just economy.

Speaking on behalf of the idled Severstal workers, Gary Steinbeck, Subdistrict Director for the United Steelworkers said President Trumka “has a vision for the future and understands the tough challenges Labor is facing.”



Following the event at the idled mill in Warren, President Trumka traveled to the Youngstown Labor History Center on the campus of Youngstown

State University for a roundtable meeting with area labor, community, and faith leaders. The focus of the discussion centered on the economic struggles facing working families in today’s economy.

The newly-elected AFL-CIO President listened to the concerns of those present, not just on the amount of jobs lost in the Valley, but the impact that the economic downturn has had on the entire community, affecting everything from available community services, public schools, infrastructure, and the faith community.

Promising to be a visible and vocal force for change in this country, President Trumka told of his family’s ties to the valley and promised “I guarantee you, I’m coming back. You’re going to see me everywhere.”

# The Ohio ARA In Opposition to Medicare “Advantage” in Public Pension Systems

**Submitted by: Norm Wernet**

The Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans in convention September 08, 2009 adopted the resolution below to express our ongoing opposition to the privatization of Medicare and the wasteful expenditure of the Medicare Trust Fund and taxpayer money in subsidies to the insurance industry.

## Resolution on OPERS and Medicare Advantage

- **WHEREAS** the labor and retiree movements, including the Alliance for Retired Americans, are strongly opposed to the privatization of Medicare, and
- **WHEREAS** the “Medicare Advantage” program is designed to draw seniors out of the traditional Medicare program and into private insurance plans and, by receiving higher payments from Medicare for its services, is contributing to the financial instability of Medicare; and
- **WHEREAS** we recognize the financial pressures being faced by the five public retiree systems which, regardless of the reasons, are threatening the viability of the health care funds; and
- **WHEREAS** these funds are now contracting with private, “Medicare Advantage” insurance companies in an attempt to save some money in the short term; therefore
- **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans deplores the privatizing of Medicare through the wholesale contracting out of its health insurance to “Medicare Advantage” companies; and be it
- **RESOLVED** that that the Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans does not accept the privatization of Medicare as necessary to “save” the public health care funds, as claimed by the Boards of these retiree systems.; and be it
- **RESOLVED** that this resolution be forwarded to the five public pension plans, the ARA, the National and Ohio AFL-CIO, and Ohio unions with members in these retiree systems.

**Submitted by the Cleveland AFL-CIO Retiree Council,  
Adopted Ohio ARA Convention September 08, 2009**

The convention of 125 affiliate leaders is aware that some in the General Assembly view public sector worker

retirement benefits as easy political fodder and have urged reduction in public pension system health care expenditures and pensions.

The Ohio ARA stands in opposition to the use of “advantage” plans. The move by the pension systems to force all Medicare eligible retirees into “advantage” plans while a cost savings for the moment is wasting taxpayer dollars and weakening Medicare, the public health insurance program for all seniors. The Medicare Trust fund is in negative cash flow now and will be out of funds between 2014 and 2017 in large measure because of the

“advantage” subsidies. This short-term monetary savings is the invention of those who want “entitlement reform” and the privatization of Medicare – health care coverage based on individual ability to pay.

To add insult to injury, **Humana**, which gained the largest chunk of Ohio retirees from OPERS,

has sent a letter nationally to those in its “advantage” plans suggesting that healthcare insurance reform that includes reductions in “advantage” subsidies would mean reductions in covered services. *“...if the proposed funding cut levels become law, millions of seniors and disabled individuals could lose many of the important benefits and services that make Medicare Advantage health plans so valuable.”* This is the same company that has paid tens of millions of dollars in fines and settlement orders to the states, the federal government, and doctors and other medical providers for failure to pay agreed upon prices, and fraudulent billing of Medicaid and Medicare.

**The corporate arrogance of Humana is yet another example of why health insurance reform is needed.**

**United Health** another of the top five health insurance giants last year threatened patients in Central Ohio with the loss of access to their doctors and hospitals when it did not get its way in price negotiations with Ohio Health(Grant and Riverside Hospitals and Physicians Group). The Ohio Department of Insurance fined the corporate giant a quarter of a million dollars.

Medicare “advantage” is an invention created in the middle of the night in 2003 by and for the for-profit insurance industry that has not, cannot, and will not find a viable business model to provide health insurance for seniors and retirees. They did not do it before 1965 and they have not done it since without large taxpayer subsidies. The **Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans** has witnessed the results of the past when seniors found they were dropped after getting sick. Funding Medicare permanently for everyone is the way the health security for all seniors.



# Fix Health Care Now! Rally Gathered Hundreds of Activists

Submitted by Karen Krause

On Saturday, September 19th, over two hundred northwest Ohio residents gathered at a Fix Health Care Now! rally sponsored by Toledo Jobs with Justice and Interfaith Worker Justice Coalition. The rally was held to raise public awareness for real health care reform, including the need for a robust public health insurance option, and to support the strong positions that have been taken by Representative Kaptur and Senator Brown.

The program was MC'd by Bob Lynn Jr., Jobs with Justice (JwJ) Secretary. Participants snacked on hot dogs and chips, while listening to music and a number of speakers with unique perspectives on the current health care crisis. Speakers included Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur; Rev. Larry Clark, JwJ Faith Chair; Joe McNamarea, President, Toledo City Council; Dan Rutt; Dr. Zaheer Hasan; Danielle Nameth, representing Senator Sherrod Brown; Cathy Johns; and Father John Blaser. A great local band called Empire Drift provided music gratis.

Over 100 participants signed statements of support for the public option and another 66 signed postcards to be delivered to local members of congress, urging legislators to Fix It Now!



*Councilman Steve Steel with daughter Ruthie Steel, Catherine Hernandez and Emily Ellis.*

The rally was endorsed by: Toledo Area AFL-CIO, Williams Co. CLC, NWOBCTC, CWA 4319, UFCW 75, IBEW 8, IBEW 245, AFSCME OC 8, Local 33, Local 50, Locals 84, 323 & 2375 Workers United, OAPSE, OPEIU, CBTU, APRI and NWO/UHCAN. Members of the endorsing groups assisted with advertising, outreach, preparation, set-up and clean up.

Three area TV stations provided coverage on the rally.

## Workplace Safety Conference Scheduled



The Ohio AFL-CIO will hold a Safety Conference on November 17-18, 2009 at the Renaissance Hotel in Columbus, OH. The conference will stress the importance of safety committees at the

workplace, the relationship between workers' compensation and safety, and address concerns of safety committee members. Speakers include representatives from the Bureau of Workers' Compensation Safety and Hygiene Division, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, as well as local union safety experts. At this point the agenda is still being formulated, so if you have any suggestions for topics to be discussed, please email them to Amanda Sabol at [asabol@ohafcio.org](mailto:asabol@ohafcio.org).

Registration details will be mailed to all affiliated local unions and CLCs in the next couple of weeks.

**Submitted by: Amanda Sabol**