

## Energy Policy

Governor Ted Strickland unveiled his vision for new policies on utilities and energy generation. "Energy, Jobs and Progress," released in August, outlined seven main policy points: 1. Strike a balance between the protection of regulation and the opportunities of markets, 2. Create policies to stimulate renewable and advanced energy production, 3. Provide transparency and accountability, 4. Make sure customers get equal footing with utilities, 5. Modernize Ohio's electric infrastructure, 6. Make energy efficiency a central element, and 7. Make the state's power sector prepare to address environmental issues that will result from climate change.

The Governor's policy paper was put in to legislative form by the Governor's office and submitted to the Ohio Senate (SB 221). The Ohio AFL-CIO has joined the Ohio Manufactures Association and other major statewide business and consumer groups in support of the Governor's proposal to end electric de-regulation as we know it. The Ohio AFL-CIO believes the bill will increase reliability, spur job growth and to keep electricity costs in check when the rate caps expire at the end of 2008.

After one month of intensive hearings, the committee passed a sub bill with some changes out and on to the full Senate, where it passed unanimously. The bill is now before the House Utilities Committee and is expected to be voted on in February, however the Republicans are not cooperating with the Governor in the House as well as they did in the Senate. For more information, contact Maryellen O'Shaughnessy at the Ohio AFL-CIO at 614.224.8271.

## Economic Development

Tim Burga, Ohio AFL-CIO Chief of Staff, joined Lieut. Gov. Lee Fisher and a 59-member delegation on the Ohio Business and Investment Trip to Japan in September, in order to explore new opportunities in Ohio for Japanese companies to invest in Ohio as well as avenues for Ohio exports.

The Ohio Department of Development, under Lieutenant Governor Lee Fisher, has begun a strategic planning process to stem the tide of Ohio jobs lost and look at policies to attract new business. The Ohio AFL-CIO joined business, education, and economic development leaders in a free-ranging discussion about ways to grow Ohio's ailing economy. Tim Burga mentioned to the group that any honest conversation about job loss and ways to attract new business have to deal with the cost of health care and unfair global trade that benefits newly industrialized and third world countries that exploit workers and ignore international laws and norms.

## Workforce Development Rapid Response

The Ohio AFL-CIO has been awarded a grant by the Strickland administration to implement a statewide Workforce Development Rapid Response program. The program, being administered by the United Labor Agency, is designed to support a series of activities to assist in layoff aversion, improve services to laid off workers, advance the competitiveness of manufacturing firms in the state, retain jobs in the sector and to connect labor with the public workforce system. For contact information, go to [www.ohafclcio.org](http://www.ohafclcio.org).

## Health Care Reform

Governor Strickland has developed a health care reform workgroup of which the goals are to expand health coverage to all children, reduce by half the number of uninsured adults by 2011, and improve the overall health of Ohioans by addressing the causes of poor health through an emphasis on prevention. On August 1, 2007, Strickland announced that Ohio was one of 14 states selected to participate in the 2007 Coverage Institute sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's State Coverage Initiatives (SCI) program. The Governor

assembled a task force comprising a 12-member State Coverage Initiative Team and a 40-member Healthcare Coverage Initiative Advisory Committee. The Ohio AFL-CIO as a stakeholder in this effort will continue to take part in the meetings.

## Township Firefighters

The Ohio Association of Professional Firefighters (OAPF) have been successful in getting a bill introduced which would remove a loophole in the collective bargaining law which prohibits township firefighters with less than 5,000 residents in the township to join a union and become public employees. The bill, HB371, has been introduced by Rep. Larry Flowers (R-19) and has 57 co-sponsors. The Ohio AFL-CIO will work with the OAPF on moving the House to hold hearings on the bill and ultimately securing passage.

## Teachers/Binding Arbitration

Sen. John Carey (R-Wellston) has introduced legislation to prohibit classroom teachers employed by boards of education from striking and instead require binding arbitration to settle their unresolved collective bargaining disputes and to make an appropriation. The Ohio AFL-CIO immediately joined the Ohio Federation of Teachers and the Ohio Education Association in opposing the measure, SB264.

## HB694 (Campaign Finance) Litigation

On December 5, Judge Bender ruled in favor of the Ohio AFL-CIO and other plaintiffs and threw out HB694 in its entirety based on the fact that the presiding officers never signed the bill passed by the General Assembly. Subsequently, the Attorney General filed a motion to dismiss our legal claims that HB 694 was not validly enacted. The AG's argument is that the claims are moot because the same statutory provisions were re-enacted as part of the state budget bill (HB 119) in June of this year. We have filed a memorandum in opposition and all parties had a conference with the Judge.

On January 2, the Ohio AFL-CIO and other plaintiffs received a new procedural order from Judge Bender that another briefing was scheduled to decide the effect of the budget bill (HB 119) changes to HB 694 upon his earlier decision. As a result, the new date for final briefs is March 8th. The judge apparently is looking to proceed in a manner that will allow him to fully consider and decide the issue under the rules of civil procedure.

## Progressive Minimum Wage

Beginning January 1 Ohio's lowest wage earners will be getting a much-needed raise. The successful labor led 2006 ballot initiative to raise the state minimum wage from \$5.15 per hour to \$6.85 has been in place for one year now. Now, the progressive and all-important part of the initiative goes into place - providing an annual pay raise as the consumer price index rises. This means the first wage index based on inflation moves the new minimum wage rate to \$7.00 per hour for non-tipped employees. Tipped employees are also receiving a raise but at a different rate.

As you may remember during the 2006 campaign the Ohio AFL-CIO was firm about removing politics from the minimum wage debate and therefore the annual rate index was the key. As we said then and repeat now when you stand with one worker you stand with all workers. As Ohio continues its stark wage decline compared to rest of the nation a raise for our lowest wage workers is a step in the right direction.

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Electronic Newsletter *On the Move*  
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