



LaborLetter

Representing one million workers and their families

February/March 2005

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Notes and Quotes

That Wal-Mart would rather shut its doors, putting nearly 200 people out of work, than allow its employees to operate under conditions of respect and dignity, speaks volumes.

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney on Wal-Mart's closing of the Jonquiere, Canada store after employees there voted to unionize.

Labor Stands Strong Against Social Security Privatization *Edward Jones Bows Out Under Consumer Pressure*



Joe Botte, Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans' Legislative Committee Chair (center), retired Gasworkers and residents of UNITE HERE Senior Apartments let their feelings be know at the Valentine's Day rally in front of Charles Schwab's offices in downtown Chicago.

The AFL-CIO, the Alliance for Retired Americans, AARP, Congressional Democrats and many other community groups representing workers, the elderly and disabled are mounting an all-out attack against President Bush and the investment corporations that are pumping major capital into an unprecedented effort to privatize Social Security - a move that would line the pockets of money managers with billions of dollars in management fees and commissions. And so far the concerted effort is working.

After major protests by union members and community groups at Edward Jones' offices in Missouri and Nebraska, the investment company resigned from the Alliance for Worker Retirement Security (AWRS), President Bush's business coalition supporting Social Security privatization. Waddell & Reed, another investment firm supporting privatization has withdrawn from the Bush coalition after their name appeared on the AFL-CIO target list. And Pfizer, previously a public supporter of privatization, has now taken a neutral position on the Bush plan. The AFL-CIO and its allies have now set their sites on the Charles Schwab Company. The company's CEO and namesake is a longtime supporter of diverting Social Security funds into private accounts.

At a Valentine's Day rally outside Schwab offices in downtown Chicago, protesters labeled the privatization plan a "sweetheart deal" for



Illinoisans to Protect Social Security held a press conference in Springfield March 8th to announce they will call on Congressmen LaHood and Shimkus to oppose privatization of Social Security. All Illinois Democratic Congressmen and women have signed the AFL-CIO Strengthen Social Security Pledge to oppose privatization proposals. Illinois AFL-CIO Field Director Erica Hade spoke at the press event outlining the upcoming efforts of the State Federation in the fight against President Bush's plan.

investment firms that would enrich companies like Schwab at the expense of future retirees, the disabled, widows and orphans.

Illinoisans to Protect Social Security (IPSS), a coalition of labor, consumer, student, senior and disability organizations in the state, who planned the rally, called on Schwab to stop funding efforts to privatize Social Security that would cut benefits for future beneficiaries.

"Make no mistake about it," said William McNary of Citizen Action/Illinois, "privatization is not a plan to strengthen retirement security but a scheme to divert money from the Social Security Trust Fund into the hands of Charles Schwab and Wall Street investment giants."

According to IPSS, the Schwab Company has supported the Cato Institute and the Alliance for Worker Retirement Security, two of most aggressive groups promoting Social Security privatization. And Schwab officers consulted with the White House voicing support for privatization as a featured part of President Bush's economic summit in December.

As the world's largest discount broker and manager of 401(k) plans and other retirement funds, Schwab could stand to become one of the biggest money-makers from a privatization deal. Schwab's profits fell by 64 percent last quarter, and its

stock price has dropped from a high of \$50 to trade near \$11. Privatization could bail out the ailing company.

"There is no crisis in Social Security funding," said Hal Gullet of the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans. "Privatization would only make Americans' retirement less secure. It would reduce future guaranteed benefits by up to 50 percent, costing the average retiree a projected \$152,000 if they live 20 years after retirement."

It is estimated that privatizing the 70-year old Social Security program would explode the deficit by borrowing \$2 trillion over the next ten years. There is no question that Social Security needs to be reevaluated and updated, just as it was during the Reagan presidency, but without weakening the program and burdening recipients by cutting benefits and adding to the federal debt.

The national AFL-CIO's aggressive grass-roots campaign to stop the privatization of Social Security includes reactivating the member mobilization network from the Labor 2004 campaign, conducting informational rallies and pickets, developing a speakers' bureau, conducting educational workshops for union leaders and activists, working with allies, reaching out to the media via editorial board meetings and op-eds, and targeting the investment firms who align themselves with the Securities Industry of America's support for privatization.



Hal Gullett, President of the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans reads a statement to the press at the Schwab rally.

Real numbers

47
Million

Number of Americans who will count on Social Security this year.

Source: Center for Budget & Policy Priorities.

Real numbers

50%

The amount the deficit could be reduced by this year if the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy were rolled back.

Source: Center for Budget & Policy Priorities.

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SOCIAL SECURITY - FIX IT, DON'T RISK IT!

SOCIAL SECURITY FACTS

What You Should Know About Social Security Privatization

- **Privatizing Social Security would cut guaranteed benefits by 40 percent even for workers who don't choose private accounts.**

The average retiree who works a full career under the Bush plan would lose \$152,000 in retirement benefits.
(*The Century Foundation, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Center for Economic and Policy Research*)

- **Risky privatized accounts won't make up for the benefits cuts.**

For people with private accounts, the government would take at least 70 cents in retirement for every \$1 in their accounts - on top of the 40 percent benefits cuts.
(*Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*)

- **Privatization would leave many retirees in poverty.**

Taxpayers and family members would have to provide them the help that now comes from Social Security's guaranteed benefits.

- **Privatization would explode the federal deficit, saddling our children with \$4.9 trillion in debt.**

(*Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Center for American Progress*)

- **Privatization would open Social Security up to corruption, waste and Enron-ization.**

Politicians would decide which Wall Street firms make billions in fees from the private accounts.

- **Women particularly benefit from Social Security.**

Women live longer, are less likely to have a pension and make less money over their lifetimes than men.

- **The Social Security Trust Fund is viable through 2052.**

The fund currently worth over \$1,500,000,000,000 (one and a half trillion dollars) will provide enough money to allow full Social Security benefits until 2052.
(*Congressional Budget Office Report*)

What Is Social Security?

- Social Security provides a guaranteed income each year for more than 47 million retirees, family members of workers who have died and people with disabilities. About 30 percent of Social Security beneficiaries receive survivor or disability benefits. (*Social Security Administration*)
- Nearly two-thirds of retirees count on Social Security for most of their retirement incomes. (*Social Security Administration*)
- Social Security beneficiaries earned their benefits by paying into the system throughout their working years. Social Security is not a government handout!
- American workers pay into Social Security on their earned income only up to \$90,000. Any income over that amount is exempt.
- Social Security is a safety net that keeps retirees out of poverty. Between 1960 and 2004, Social Security helped cut the poverty rate among seniors by more than two-thirds, from 35 percent to 10 percent. (*Social Security Administration*)
- There are four types of Social Security benefits: retirement, early-retirement, disability, and survivorship.
- 3 million children who have lost a parent are beneficiaries of Social Security.
- Social Security administrative costs are less than 1 cent per dollar paid out in benefits. This is much lower than the average administrative costs of 12 to 14 percent for private insurers. (*Social Security Administration, American Council of Life Insurers*)
- Completely funding Social Security into the 22nd Century would only require about one-quarter of the revenue lost because of the Bush tax cuts - or the amount that went to people with incomes over \$500,000 a year.

For more information go to www.aflcio.org/socialssecurity.

AFL-CIO National Day of Action On Social Security Privatization

Thursday, March 31st

A day to target the Wall Street investment firms that are bankrolling the Bush privatization campaign.

**Join the Illinois AFL-CIO, the Chicago Federation of Labor
and the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans**

WHEN: Thursday, March 31 - 12 Noon

WHAT: Rally against Charles Schwab and Social Security Privatization

WHERE: Charles Schwab office 150 South Wacker Drive, Chicago

For more information call Erica Hade,
Illinois AFL-CIO, 312-251-1414

ILLINOIS FAMILIES RALLY FOR MAIN STREET NOT WALL STREET

Saturday, April 2nd - 12:00 Noon

HOUSE SPEAKER DENNIS HASTERT'S OFFICE
7 N. River Road, Batavia, IL

Bring the whole family! Food for all! Special activities for kids!

**Tell Speaker Haster NO TO PRIVATE ACCOUNTS,
BENEFIT CUTS!**

Cosponsored by Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans & the
Illinois United to Protect Social Security Coalition

Governor Signs Organizing Expansion Bill



Pictured left to right with the Governor are: Sean Stott, director of Government Affairs LIUNA; John Penn, business representative LIUNA Great Lakes Region; Margaret Blackshere, president Illinois AFL-CIO; Ed Smith, president LIUNA Southern and Central Illinois District Council; Rep. Brandon Phelps (D-Harrisburg); Rep. Eddie Washington (D-Chicago); and Rocky Raikes, president LIUNA Local 393.

Workers' Rights Expanded in Illinois New Law Lowers the Threshold for Organizing

Public workers in Illinois may now organize to form a union with only five or more employees in a department or unit, according to new legislation recently signed into law by Governor Blagojevich.

HB 2577 lowers the threshold on the number of workers needed to form a union to five from 35. Even small towns and divisions throughout the state will now be included in the collective bargaining law.

"Passing legislation that guarantees a worker's right to organize is the primary objective of the Illinois AFL-CIO and our affiliates," said Margaret Blackshere, president of the State Federation. "This new legislation continues the trend in Illinois to provide these basic organizing rights to public employees. Unfortunately, the state laws do not cover private sector workers. It is up to our federal legislators and the president to enact the Employee Free Choice Act that will guarantee the right to organize for all workers across this country. Illinois is setting the standard for workers' rights. We are proud of our governor and our allies in the Illinois General Assembly. Now the federal government must follow our lead."

Sponsors of HB 2577 were Rep. Eddie Washington (D-Waukegan) and Sen. Terry Link (D-Lake Bluff). Governor Blagojevich signed the new law on Friday, January 21. It goes into effect June 1st of this year.

To see the vote count on HB 2577 go to www.ilga.gov.

Locked Out Workers to Receive Unemployment New Legislation Restores Workers' Benefits

In a victory for working men and women in Illinois, the General Assembly approved and the Governor signed a law to allow workers who are locked out by their employers to draw unemployment benefits until they are allowed to go back to work or until they find new jobs.

"This legislation restores a worker's right to draw unemployment if they are forced out by their employer," said Illinois AFL-CIO President Margaret Blackshere. "When workers go on strike they understand the ramifications. They forego a stable paycheck and live with uncertainty in order to perpetuate fair collective bargaining. But large companies can lock workers out of their jobs with no repercussions. This new legislation allows workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own to collect Unemployment Insurance when they are locked out by their employer. This is a basic workers' rights bill that helps restore justice to the workplace."

Senate Bill 1994, which passed mostly along party lines in both Chambers, brings Illinois in line with 22 other states that provide unemployment insurance to

locked out workers. Surrounding states that have similar laws include Iowa, Kentucky, Ohio, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

The Illinois AFL-CIO, the United Auto Workers, the Steelworkers, UFCW, AFSCME and many other international unions lobbied hard for the bill's passage.

"Ensuring locked out workers are eligible for unemployment benefits is a fundamental labor-management issue," said UAW District Director Dennis Williams. "The goal is to keep both parties at the bargaining table in order to work out an agreement that is fair to both sides. If a company can threaten to lock out its workers with no pay - that's unjust coercion. This legislation helps protect collective bargaining rights."

President Blackshere praised the bill's sponsors Sen. Ronen (D-Chicago) and Rep. Jefferson (D-Rockford) and thanked all legislators who supported the bill.

"Once again the Illinois General Assembly and the Governor have stood up for workers' rights," said Blackshere. "We appreciate the support from our allies and the legislative leadership."

Labor Vows to Oppose Changes to State Pension Plans Calls for revenue creation to fix budget crisis

In his Budget Address on February 16th, the Governor announced his plans to revamp the pension plans of public employees in an attempt to save the state millions of dollars and solve the current unfunded liability of those programs. But Labor leaders have criticized the plan saying it does nothing to address the pension funding crisis and that it will weaken the pension systems and discourage young people from entering public service.

The Governor's proposal would create a two-tiered pension system that would cut pension benefits to workers just entering the state's workforce, putting them on a lower threshold than more experienced workers. The plan also calls for cost-of-living cuts for future retirees and raising the retirement eligibility age for new workers.

"Illinois' budget deficit is critical and solving it is imperative," said Margaret Blackshere, president of the Illinois AFL-CIO. "But it is a disappointment that the Governor's proposed plan seeks to weaken the pension plans of hard working men and women in our state. We had hoped the Governor would seek to remedy the budget situation through revenue creation not with cuts to pension benefits. Labor leaders will continue to work with the Office of Management and Budget to create an acceptable remedy to the budget crisis. But workers and state agencies have already made considerable sacrifices in the attempt to reduce the budget deficit. Now the tough choice will be to say to

all the citizens of Illinois that to get our financial house in order and provide properly for our retirees, our children and the uninsured, we must create a new revenue base."

In a press conference held just after the Governor's remarks, Illinois Federation of Teachers President Jim Dougherty said, "We still face teacher shortages in crucial subject areas and we are constantly attempting to recruit the best and brightest young minds to enter the teaching field. Whacking the pension benefits of those studying to become teachers or professors is a sure way to steer them to another profession."

Dougherty also pointed out that Illinois' pension plans would be fully funded today if the state had lived up to its prior commitments. "The legislature's decision to skip pension payments for years and the negative compounding created by those bad decisions caused nearly all of the current unfunded liability," he said. "The members of the pension systems have never missed a payment. Illinois teachers won't receive Social Security benefits; their state pension is their only pension. And they pay more into their pension system than teachers in other non-Social Security states."

The teachers' unions, as well as SEIU and AFSCME leaders have been meeting on an individual basis with the Governor's staff to voice concerns and discuss other options for funding the public pension systems.

Union Jobs Coming to Southern Illinois Construction on Prairie State Generation Plant to Begin Soon

On Monday, Feb. 7, Governor Blagojevich was in Nashville, IL to announce plans for the Prairie State Power Plant to be built in Washington County between Marissa and Lively Grove.

The building phase of the plant will generate 2,500 construction jobs - all union labor. When complete the mine and generation plant will add 400-500 permanent jobs to the local economy.

Margaret Blackshere, president of the Illinois AFL-CIO accompanied the Governor on his trip to Nashville where he assured the crowd that all of the jobs at the mine and plant would be union jobs ensuring good wages, benefits and safety regulations.

"This will be one of the largest coal-fired plants in the nation," said Blackshere. "It is a milestone in reviving Illinois' coal industry. We look forward to working with Peabody Coal Company to ensure workers' rights at the mine and generation plant."



Legislative Update

The 94th General Assembly was sworn in on January 12th. Membership in each Chamber is: House of Representatives - 65 Democrats, 53 Republicans; Senate - 31 Democrats, 27 Republicans. Senate President Emil Jones was reelected to that position and Michael Madigan was elected for his eleventh term as Speaker of the House.

For a complete 94th General Assembly calendar log onto www.ilga.gov.

Broadway In Chicago

Broadway in Chicago has been the host of two pre-Broadway world premier musical runs. Members of the Chicago Federation of Musicians Local 10-208, A.F.M. have been "work shopping" the productions of *Spamalot* and *All Shook Up* in preparation for their openings on Broadway.

Telling the legendary tale of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table and their quest for the Holy Grail, is the Monty Python extravaganza *Spamalot*, playing at the Shubert Theatre and starring David Hyde Pierce of *Frazier* fame.

Appearing at the Cadillac Palace Theatre is *All Shook Up*. It is a musical comedy about "a small town girl dreaming of hitting the open road" and a guitar-playing stranger who "brings romance, rebellion and rock-n-roll into her life."

It was an honor that Chicago was chosen as the premier city for the world premiers of the two shows that are sure to be hits on Broadway.



Members of the *All Shook Up* orchestra include: Scott Bentall, trombone; Tim Burke, trumpet; Carey Deadman, trumpet; Jim Gailloro, reeds; Marc Hogan, bass; John Kornegay, reeds; Ron Ruvio, trumpet; Joe Sonnefeldt, percussion; and Linda Van Dyke, reeds.



Members of the *Spamalot* orchestra include: Melanie Cottle, French horn; Robert Freier, violin; Jeff Handley, percussion; Katherine Hughes, violin; Mark Lekas, cello; Betty Lewis, violin; Jeremy Kahn, keyboard; Steve Leinheiser, reeds; Bob Lustrea, trombone; Sean McNeely, reeds; Mark Olen, trumpet; Scott Reed, guitar/ukulele; Linda Reyes, viola; Scott Rosenthal, bass; and Brent Turney, trumpet.

Good Jobs First to Host National Conference

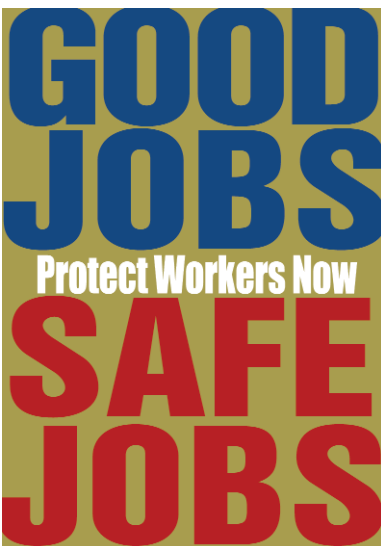
Good Jobs First, the nationally recognized organization helping grassroots groups and policy-makers make economic development subsidies accountable and effective, is having its second national conference at the Wyndham Baltimore Inner Harbor Hotel, May 11- 13 in Baltimore.

The conference will include intensive training, accessible to newcomers but also designed to interest more experienced organizers. Sessions include community organizing for sustainable development (including community benefits agreements), anti-Wal-Mart/big box organizing, corporate research, and sprawl and working families. Building effective labor-community partnerships on common issues will be a pervasive theme.

The conference will also highlight the many recent victories of the movement for accountable and sustainable economic development, and discuss the many challenges ahead, including those posed by current federal budget and fiscal policies. It will be an ideal opportunity to share experiences and learn about cutting-edge initiatives and organizing campaigns and issues across the country.

For more information contact:

Jeff McCourt, Project Director, Good Jobs First-Illinois
(312-332-1480 or jeff@goodjobsfirst.org)



Workers' Memorial Day
April 28th

For a complete list of Workers' Memorial Day events log onto www.ilaf1-cio.org

UAW Coming to the Illinois State Fair Labor Area



The United Auto Workers are bringing their NASCAR semi trailer and two official racecars to this year's Illinois State Fair. The semi will be parked next to the Illinois AFL-CIO Labor Pavilion near the main entrance of the fair. The union plans to have the Dale Earnhardt Jr. Budweiser car and the Jimmie Johnson Loews car on display. The UAW display also includes an electronic racetrack for children. The fair runs August 12-21 in Springfield.

Contraceptive Equity Awareness Campaign



The Governor's office recently launched the state's Contraceptive Equity Awareness campaign in an effort to inform women across the state that private insurance plans that cover outpatient drugs or services must now cover all FDA approved contraceptive services and prescriptions.

"Right now, women pay 68 percent more in out of pocket health care costs than men do, because of the cost associated with reproductive healthcare," said Governor Blagojevich. "If insurance companies can cover Viagra for men, it's only fair that they be required to cover birth control for women."

Planned Parenthood and the Chicago Sun Times are co-sponsors for the campaign to educate workers on the new law.

To download the Contraceptive Equity poster for your workplace or office go to www.illinois.gov/gov.

New Board Member



Terry Jares was recently sworn in as the newest member of the Illinois AFL-CIO Executive Board.

Terry earned both Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Music Education degrees from Illinois State University and a Master of Marketing from Roosevelt University. For over 30 years, she has performed both violin and viola on stage with symphony orchestras, in theater pits for traveling Broadway productions and in commercial recording studios. In addition to performing, she has been Vice-President of ARTRA Artists Management, a talent agency which represents classical musicians and pop attractions. A member of the Chicago Federation of Musicians since 1975, she became a member of their Board of Directors in 1996 and she is a newly elected Vice-President of the Chicago Federation of Musicians

Wal-Mart Employees' Children Top Alabama's Medicaid Rolls

Retail giant Wal-Mart tops the list of companies in Alabama that have employees with children on the state health care program for uninsured children funded by Medicaid, the Associated Press recently reported. Alabama joins a growing list of states reporting Wal-Mart as the #1 or a top corporate beneficiary of its public health program.

"Despite the fact that Wal-Mart makes enormous corporate profits, the company is stingy when it comes to its employees health care benefits," said AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney. "When its employees must join public health rolls instead of getting affordable health care on the job, Wal-Mart is shifting the cost to taxpayers. That's simply wrong."

Although the nation's largest retailer does offer health care coverage to its employees, waiting periods for employees to receive coverage are long, many employees hours are deliberately kept below 34 hours so they won't qualify and the cost is too high to afford. According to a fall 2003 AFL-CIO study, the insurance premium for Wal-Mart family coverage was as high as \$250 per month in 2004, a prohibitive expense for many of the retail giant's low paid workers.

According to a recent AP story, Wal-Mart workers' children account for 3,864 children on the [Alabama] Medicaid rolls at a cost between \$5.8 million and \$8.2 million. The next highest employer of children on public rolls was McDonalds, with 1,615 on Medicaid.

Georgia, Tennessee, Washington, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, West Virginia and Connecticut have also reported that children of Wal-Mart employees are a disproportionately large share of their state health rolls.

Currently, 26 states have introduced legislation to require states to disclose which employers are shifting health care costs to taxpayers. Championed by members of the National Labor Caucus of State Legislators, the legislation is designed to help measure the costs to state health care programs when large and profitable employers such as Wal-Mart skimp on coverage.

A 2002 Georgia state survey showed that 10,261 of the 166,000 children covered by PeachCare for Kids (a Georgia state health program) had a parent working at Wal-Mart. That's 14 times the number for the next highest employer: Publix grocery store, with 734.

And in 2004, a University of California at Berkeley Labor Center study found that in California alone, the reliance of Wal-Mart workers on public assistance programs cost the states taxpayers \$86 million annually. Health-related expenses made up \$32 million of that number.

In Illinois, HB 1044, which would create the Public Health Program Beneficiary Employer Disclosure Act, has been introduced by Rep. Flowers (D-Chicago). The law would require that an applicant for benefits under Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program, or any person requesting uncompensated care in a hospital, must identify their employer. It would also require an annual report from the Department of Public Aid identifying all employers with 25 or more public health program beneficiaries.

HB 1044 (as of this writing) had passed out of the House Human Services Committee by a vote of 7-2. Rep. Black (R-Danville) requested a fiscal note on the cost to the state of implementation.

Lincoln Museum to Open in April to Much Fan Fare

Both the Library and Museum projects built completely union.

April 16-19 in Springfield

Four days of activities will mark the much-awaited opening of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, including a public dedication hosted by Governor Blagojevich on April 19. The four-day public celebration will recreate "The Great American Story" of Abraham Lincoln's life through exhibits that employ state-of-the-art technology.

For complete information go to www.alplm.prg.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Saturday, April 16

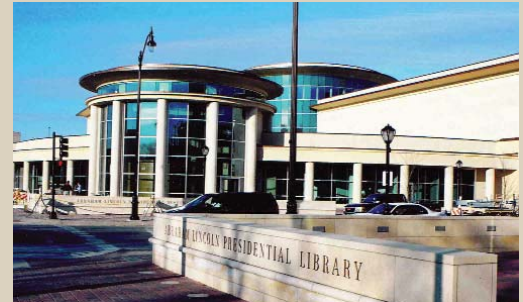
- **Looking for Lincoln Block Party** (10 a.m. - 9 p.m., downtown Springfield from the Old State Capitol to Lincoln's family home neighborhood to the Museum) - A two-day celebration featuring living history, music, theater troupes, choirs, folk dancers and artists from across the country.
- **Culinary Court** (10 a.m. - 9 p.m., along Washington Street, north of the Old State Capitol) - A food festival featuring cuisine from Springfield area restaurants.

Sunday, April 17

- **Day two of Looking for Lincoln Block Party** (10 a.m. - 9 p.m.)
- **Day two of Culinary Court** (10 a.m. - 9 p.m.)
- **Interfaith Service of Thanksgiving for the Life of Abraham Lincoln**
Location: Union Square Park / Presidential Museum Time: 2 p.m. Rain Out: Convention Center
- **Scholarly Conference "Lincoln in the Twenty-First Century"** (all day, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library) - A two-day conference will examine everything from Lincoln's attitude toward race and his domestic life, to his wartime leadership and assassination. The conference will conclude at 3:30 p.m. on the 18th with a panel hosted by C-SPAN's Brian Lamb and featuring three generations of the world's foremost Lincoln scholars -David Herbert Donald, Harold Holzer, Matthew Pinsker and David Gergen.
- **Recreation of Lincoln's Farewell Address followed by a Torchlight Parade** (6:30 p.m., Old Train Depot to Union Square Park/Presidential Museum)
- **Outdoor Concert, Fireworks and Laser Spectacular** (8 p.m., Union Square Park) - With musical accompaniment by the 312th Army Band.

Monday, April 18

- **Breakfast sponsored by the Abraham Lincoln Association** (7:30 a.m., Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library). This breakfast will feature an outlook to the year 2009 and progress reports from the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission.
- **Day two of Scholarly Conference "Lincoln in the Twenty-First Century"** (all day, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library).



- **Recreated Lincoln White House State Dinner** (7:30 p.m., Renaissance Hotel, Springfield) - This fundraiser for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation will feature a Lincoln-era menu and 19th-century music courtesy of the 312th Army Band. The first David Herbert Donald Prize for excellence in Lincoln studies will be presented to its namesake, the author of the definitive one-volume Lincoln biography.

Tuesday, April 19

- **Public Dedication** (11 a.m., Union Square Park) - Gov. Blagojevich and other prominent figures will speak at this hour-long event signaling the official opening of the museum. Additionally, the winner of a student essay contest sponsored by the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum and C-SPAN will read his or her modern-day version of the Gettysburg address to the crowd.

The museum's grand opening will follow the dedication, giving the public the opportunity to experience firsthand the museum's 40,000 square feet of permanent exhibits - twice the size of any other presidential museum.

The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum will be open to the public on Saturday, April 15th and Sunday, April 16th from 10:00am until 4:00pm. Admission will be charged. The Museum will reopen on April 19th immediately following the dedication at no charge.

STATE NEWS

Chicago Supermarket Violated Labor Law

The National Labor Relations Board is investigating charges that La Casa Del Pueblo in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood violated federal labor laws last year during an organizing drive by Local 881 UFCW. The NLRB alleges that between July and October of 2004 store management fired workers, forced them to take unpaid vacations and threatened them with deportation in an effort to thwart the organizing efforts. The store is also accused of assisting another union - Local 711 the Independent union of National Amalgamated Workers - to organize the workers. It is illegal for an employer to take part in the formation of a union.

Moises Zavala, organizer for Local 881 says the union is seeking back pay for the workers who lost their jobs and had their hours reduced, and a termination of Local 711's agreement with the grocer to represent its employees.

The complaint will be heard on April 18th in Chicago.

UFCW Local 881 Asks State Lawmakers to Return Wal-Mart Money

Local 881 is working with other unions and Central Labor Councils to put a damper on Wal-Mart's political cash spigot. They have asked politicians who have received an endorsement from the working families of the Illinois AFL-CIO not to take contributions from Wal-Mart. If they have received contributions from Wal-Mart, the union has asked them to send the money back.

For a complete listing of state legislators who have accepted Wal-Mart campaign contributions and of those who have returned the money log onto www.local881ufcw.org.

Chrysler to Hire 1,000 at Belvidere Plant

Chrysler recently announced plans to add 1,000 jobs at its plant in Belvidere, just east of Rockford. The Company says it will spend \$419 million to rebuild the plant's production line to accommodate multiple vehicle models. The UAW represents workers at the plant.



Amalgamated Bank Appoints Union Leaders

Steven Cisco, recording/corresponding secretary of the International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) Local 150 has joined the Labor Advisory Board for the Amalgamated Bank of Chicago. The 24-member council is chaired jointly by James Buchanan, president of Pipefitters Local 597 and Brian Hickey, president and business manager of the IUOE Local 399.

Founded in 1922 by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union of American, Amagamatad Bank of Chicago specializes in serving the financial needs of area businesses, local government units and many international, national and local unions and their members. The Bank reported assets of \$670 million as of December 2004.

Map of Chicago's Labor History on Sale

A new map of Chicago's historic labor sites is now available on line. For \$5 you can buy "The Labor Trail" a complete guide to monuments, buildings, neighborhoods, churches, meeting halls, and public art that depicts and reveals the rich history of Chicago's working class struggles. The map is the result of much work and research by community labor activists and the Chicago Center for Working Class Studies. To order the map go to www.labortrail.org.

Union Plus Offers New Credit Card for Union Members

Using the purchasing power of 13 million union members, Union Privilege, the AFL-CIO's member benefits organization, has launched a newly revamped Union Plus Credit Card program that gives cardholders benefits designed exclusively for union members and their families.

The new card offers -

- Low introductory and balance transfer rates
- Help for members on strike or facing hardship
- All service calls answered by U.S.-based customer representatives, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
- 100% protection against fraud
- No annual fees
- Huge discounts on eye care, prescription drugs and movie tickets
- Unlimited high-speed dial-up Internet access for \$9.95 a month

For complete information on the new Union Plus Credit card or to apply call 1-800-522-4000 or log onto www.UnionPlus.org.



First Annual Mother Jones Festival Planned

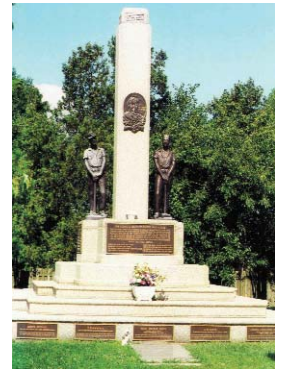
Mount Olive, Illinois, will host the first ever festival in honor of Mother Jones, one of this country's most dedicated workers' rights activists. Mount Olive is the official burial site of Mary Harris "Mother" Jones.

Community leaders are planning a three-day festival June 24-26 that will include a Mother Jones Banquet, portrayals of Mother Jones' life by professional union actors, prominent speakers from the labor movement, exhibits on the history of the labor movement, a carnival for children, craft and food vendors, a parade, an antique tractor show, a softball tournament, a 5K race and a memorial service at the Mother Jones grave site in the Union Miners' Cemetery.

"This year marks the 75th anniversary of Mother Jones' death and the 175th anniversary of her birth," said Tom Spears, mayor of Mount Olive and field representative for the Member Assistance Program of the Illinois AFL-CIO.

"We felt like this was the year to kick off this event. Mother Jones was a much-celebrated Labor anarchist who worked tirelessly for laborers all across this country. But before she died in 1930, she asked to be buried 'with her boys' at the Union Miners Cemetery here. They were closest to her heart. So what better tribute to our 'Labor angel' than a party to celebrate her life and work. It is a perfect opportunity for those interested in labor and the history of labor organizations to learn and have fun."

For more information on the Mother Jones Festival log onto www.mtolive.com.



Illinois AFL-CIO CLC and Community Activists Conference

June 13-15

The State Federation has finalized plans for the annual conference for Central Labor Council leaders and community activists. The three-day conference will be held June 13-15 at beautiful Eagle Creek State Park in Shelby County near Findlay.

Member Assistance Program Resource Representative Amy Girardi says the event will be fun as well as informative. "The Eagle Creek Resort is very family-friendly and we are encouraging folks to bring along their children for a nice get-away," said Girardi. "We have planned a kick-off, Western-style BBQ on the evening of the 13th. We want attendees to bring their family or guests to the cookout."

The Resort also has a picturesque, 18-hole golf course. Conference participants will get a discounted course rate of \$45, including cart rental.

Informative workshops during the conference will focus on cultivating union officers and delegates, mobilizing activists, and building partnerships with community organizations. The Robert G. Gibson Community Service Award Banquet will be Tuesday evening at 6 pm at the resort.

For additional information call Amy Girardi at 217-544-4014 or log onto the State Federation website to download the registration form - www.ilaf1-cio.org.



Governor's Top Staff Meets With State Fed Board

Four top members of Governor Blagojevich's staff met with the Illinois AFL-CIO Executive Board on March 9th during their quarterly meeting in Springfield. Union leaders thanked and complimented the Governor and his staff for their exceptional support for workers over the past two years, but also voiced concerns about job creation and public pension plans. On hand to address the Board and answer questions were Chief of Staff Lon Monk, Deputy Chief of Staff for Labor Esther Lopez, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs Joe Cini, and Health and Human Services Director John Frigo.

"I think this meeting with the Governor's top staff and the State Federation board is unprecedented," said board member and Local 881 UFCW President Ron Powell. "I have served on this board for 30 years and never has a governor's staff member seen fit to meet with us and listen to our concerns. We applaud your support."

Many board members echoed Vice President Powell's compliment. But union leaders also asked many poignant questions of the panel about the Governor's proposed public pension funds changes. He has suggested implementing a two-tiered pension system placing newly-hired employees in a lower benefits bracket and raising the retirement age for state employees.

SEIU, AFSCME and IFT leaders talked frankly about the long-term damage the Governor's cuts would cause. Although talks are ongoing with the public employee unions over pension funding, their representatives expressed concern that the Governor "not balance the budget on the backs of working men and women."



NATIONAL NEWS

Record Trade Deficits

"I am tired of watching ships arrive at the Port of Baltimore filled with cargo for U.S. consumers and then leave empty. We cannot allow a trade deficit of this magnitude to continue; it is causing irreparable harm to American workers, farmers and businesses and it is jeopardizing our economic future."
- Rep. Benjamin Cardin (D-MD)

The Commerce Department recently reported that the trade deficit for 2004 was the largest on record, a high of \$617.7 billion - a sharp jump of 24.4 percent over the 2003 record of \$496.5 billion. The U.S. deficit with China also set a record of \$162 billion, up 30.5 percent from last year and the largest imbalance ever recorded with a single country. The trade deficit now accounts for more than 5 percent of the entire U.S. economy - forcing down the value of the U.S. dollar and increasing the amount of debt held overseas. (Nancy Pelosi House Democratic Leader - House Call)

Illegal Work Rules Go Unpunished by Bush Board

In another anti-worker ruling, the Bush NLRB certified an election loss by the Machinists at Delta Brands Inc., despite a hearing officer's recommendation that the election be set aside because the employer distributed an employee handbook containing an unlawful no-solicitation rule. The Republican majority on the board placed the burden of proof on the union, claiming it must prove the illegal policy affected the election outcome.

Until this ruling, NLRB precedent held that employers' work rules in violation of employees' rights warranted setting aside an election. This new Bush board ruling suggests illegal employer policies will go unpunished unless workers can prove they had a demonstrable effect on election outcomes. This and the other recent anti-worker decisions by the Bush board show the NLRB process is a death trap for workers trying to form unions free of obstruction and intimidation.

NLRB Rules Neutrality an Unfair Labor Practice

In a stunning decision, an NLRB regional director issued an unfair labor practice charge against private investment firm Heartland Industrial Partners and the United Steelworkers of America (USWA), claiming a neutrality and majority sign-up agreement between the two parties violates the National Labor Relations Act's prohibition on secondary boycotts.

This decision is a striking attack on the right of unions to work together with investment firms and other companies to agree to a fair process through which workers can form unions.

Wal-Mart Closes Canadian Store to Avoid Union Contract

In an blatant attempt to deny workers their freedom to have a union, Wal-Mart has decided to close its store in Jonquiere, Quebec, in response to workers' decision to seek binding arbitration after negotiations for a first contract broke down. In September, the workers formed a union with United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 503 through Quebec's majority sign-up process. Wal-Mart claims it is closing the store because it is "unprofitable." In response, the UFCW says it will file unfair labor practice charges against the company. Under Canadian labor law, it is illegal for companies to fire workers or close down a facility due to anti-union animus.

The Quebec labor board recently certified majority status at a second Quebec Wal-Mart, this one in the town of Saint-Hyacinthe. The Quebec labor board also sanctioned Wal-Mart for unfair labor practices at ongoing organizing campaigns at two other stores in Brossard and St. Foy. While Wal-Mart is clearly challenging their workers in Quebec, at least the workers have a fighting chance because of Quebec's majority sign-up and first contract arbitration provisions. If U.S. workers enjoyed similar protections, as they will when we pass the Employee Free Choice Act, we would see an explosion of Wal-Mart workers choosing to have a voice at work through union representation in the United States.

AFTRA Fights Proposed Indecency Fines

On February 17, H.R. 310, The Broadcast Decency Enforcement Act of 2005, passed the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 389-38. The House version of the bill eliminates existing warnings and allows the FCC to assess half million dollar (\$500,000) fines against both licensees and individual performers for each and every utterance deemed "indecent." The FCC's standard for indecency remains unclear and subject to change.

The American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA) had lobbied against this legislation. A statement released by the union said they were "disappointed by the outcome, but not surprised, and we are preparing to take our case to the U.S. Senate."

The union went on to say, "We will continue to argue that fining individual performers at the same rate as monolithic corporations is inherently unfair and that the chilling impact such huge fines will have on free speech and artistic expression is inevitable. We will encourage our elected leaders in the Senate to take a more reasoned, fair-minded and post-election approach to this issue which simply does not cry out for immediate action - unlike other areas such as health care reform, media consolidation, the budget deficit and international relations."

AFTRA did have success in modifying the language of the House bill prior to its passage. Because of their efforts, the following changes were made:

In the Bill itself:

- Higher standard of willful and intentional for indecency violations.
- Individual's ability to pay considered when assessing fines.

From the Committee Report:

- \$500,000 is ceiling on individual fines, not floor.
- Generally, companies will be subject to higher penalties than individuals.
- Consideration given to "pass-through" or indemnification clauses in individual contracts.
- Performer fines not applicable to songs recorded "in studio."
- Inadvertent utterances (such as sports figures during games) are exempt.

These changes, while they appear modest, will provide a much more favorable framework for lobbying discussions in the Senate.

AFTRA will be asking union members from around the country to contact their Congress men and women in the near future as the Senate bill moves forward and the two bills are hashed out in Conference Committee.

Labor Department to Investigate Sweetheart Deal with Wal-Mart

In response to Rep. George Miller's (D-Calif.) call for a review of the Department of Labor's settlement of Wal-Mart's child labor violations, the department's inspector general announced an investigation of the agreement. Most of the violations involved young workers operating dangerous heavy machinery, such as cardboard balers and chain saws. Under the settlement, Wal-Mart agreed to pay a paltry \$135,540 and will be granted 15 days of notice before department investigation of future violations. Despite Labor Department claims that the deal was standard, a House Education and Workforce Committee analysis showed it was unprecedented and entirely preferential. According to Miller, "This looks like a sweetheart deal that would help Wal-Mart's executives and hurt its workers."

Dick Gephardt Joins American Income Life

American Income Life Insurance Company (AIL), a subsidiary of Torchmark Corporation (NYSE:TMK), recently announced that Dick Gephardt, former Democratic Majority and Minority Leader in the U. S. House of Representatives for 14 years, has joined their Advisory Board. AIL Chief Executive Officer Roger Smith said, "The addition of Mr. Gephardt to the AIL family provides a new dimension of

service to customers, shareholders, and our union clientele. Mr. Gephardt's well-earned reputation for integrity, leadership and advocacy for working families is a great fit with our corporate objectives."

American Income Life is a nationally recognized all-union company providing supplemental insurance that protects union members and their families. For more information on AIL, log onto www.aillife.com.

Contract Reached at Cingular Wireless

CWA reached a tentative agreement with Cingular Wireless covering 5,300 workers under the "Orange Contract" in Districts 1, 2, 4, 7, 9 and 13. (The Districts include the following states: District 1 - CT, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, RI, VT; District 2 - DC, MD, VA, WV; District 4 - IL, IN, OH, MI, WI; District 7 - AK, AZ, CO, ID, IA, MN, MT, NE, NM, ND, OR, SD, UT, WA, WY; District 9 - CA, HI, NV; District 13 - DE, PA)

The settlement provides for a wage increase of 11 percent for Cingular workers over the four-year contract term. It also improves base compensation for retail sales members by more than 25 percent.

Among other improvements, the agreement strengthens employment security, a big issue in the wake of the merger with AT&T Wireless. It also addresses call center and retail matters such as quota relief and job duties, among other gains.

The agreement is subject to membership ratification and locals will be providing a detailed bargaining report and information on contract explanation meetings and the ratification schedule to members shortly.

Hotel Workers in San Francisco Continue Fight

Hotel workers in fourteen hotels in San Francisco are involved in a protracted contract fight.

On August 14th the union (UNITE HERE) contract for the hotel workers expired. The hotels' proposals were unacceptable. They included charging a \$275 co-pay for medical benefits. The employees of four San Francisco hotels went on strike for two weeks to protest the employers' greed. Two days later, ten other hotels locked their workers out. Even after the two-week strike ended, all fourteen hotels continued to deny their union employees access to their jobs. The lock out lasted 51 days, ending just before Thanksgiving.

A contract has still not been signed and the hotels are threatening major cuts in healthcare, including trying to take away medical benefits for many hotel workers and their families.

The hotel workers have called for a boycott of hotels involved. For a list of the fourteen hotels involved go to www.hotelworkersunite.org.

AFL-CIO Establishes Tsunami Relief Fund

The AFL-CIO has announced that its American Center for International Solidarity has created a relief fund to help with the devastating humanitarian crisis caused by the December 26th tsunami that hit many Indian Ocean coastal communities.

Thousands of union members and their families are missing or dead in the hard-hit areas. Most no longer have homes. The destruction of factories, hotels, restaurants and roads has left tens of thousands of garment, tourist and public sector workers without jobs for the foreseeable future. Rebuilding will take years. Your help is needed.

The Solidarity Center is a nonprofit organization that assists workers around the world who are struggling to build democratic and independent trade unions.

Contributions to the relief fund should be marked Tsunami Relief Fund, payable to the Solidarity Center Education Fund. The address is Tsunami Relief Fund, Solidarity Center, 1925 K Street, N.W. Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20006.

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CALENDAR

- March 22-24** IL AFL-CIO Organizing Conference
Holiday Inn City Center, Peoria
- March 25** Good Friday Holiday
IL AFL-CIO offices closed
- April 17-20** Building and Construction Trades
Department National Legislative
Conference Washington Hilton &
Towers, Washington D.C.
- June 13-15** Central Labor Councils/Community
Services Conference Eagle Creek
State Park, Findlay
- April 16-19** Abraham Lincoln Presidential
Library and Museum
Celebration - Springfield
- April 19** Dedication of the Abraham
Lincoln Presidential Museum
Springfield
- April 28** Workers' Memorial Day
- May 14** Letter Carriers Food Drive
www.nalc.org
- June 21** IL AFL-CIO Second Quarter
Executive Board meeting
IFT Office, Westmont
- July 21-23** ILCA Convention Chicago -
Holiday Inn Downtown
- June 24-26** Mother Jones Festival Mount Olive
- July 25-28** AFL-CIO National Convention
Navy Pier, Chicago
- August 12-21** Illinois State Fair, Springfield

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New MAP Staff Member



Randy Stevens has joined the Illinois AFL-CIO Member Assistance Program staff as a Field Representative in the Peoria area.

Randy is a native of Peoria County and a graduate of Illinois State University. He has a background in the safety industry, working for the past six years providing employee training in the areas of fall protection, the use of respirators and ergonomics.

Randy has an avid interest in politics, recently working on the campaigns of Dan Hynes and Representative Ricca Sloan.

Randy comes from a union family. His father was an active member in UAW Local 947 and served on the grievance committee for 12 years. And his wife Jennifer is the Vice President of Newspaper Guild 51 in Peoria. Randy and Jennifer have two children, Drew and Samantha.

Randy replaces Ron Dobson who retired at the end of last year after more than 20 years with the Illinois AFL-CIO MAP Program.

You can reach Randy at 309-673-5070.