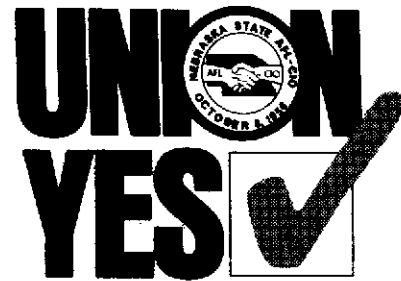


NEBRASKA STATE AFL-CIO NEWSLETTER



KEN E. MASS, *President* JAMES M. TYLSKI, *Secretary-Treasurer*
Ron Chapman, IBEW 244; Terry Moore, OFL; Bill Artmann, NAPE/AFSCME 61; Robert Biel, CWA 7470;
Jim Willis, LCLU; Robert Bartak, BAC 1; Barbara Shaw, UNITE 870; Mary Hakanson, CNCLC;
Ron Milke, IAM 543, Nicole Rhine, NALC 8; Linda Hemmerling, CWA 7400; Donna McDonald, UFCW #271;
Art Crawford, Machinists IAM 602; William Biede, Iron Workers 21; Chuck Clayton, UFCW 222

1st Quarter 2002

January, 2002

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Ken E. Mass

On behalf of the Nebraska State AFL-CIO, I want to wish all affiliated organizations and their membership a Happy New Year and hope you and your families enjoyed the peace and joy of the Holiday Season.

As we begin the new year and look back a year ago, we never thought we would be at war, dealing with a recession and confronting a hostile national administration.

The recession, which is now over ten months long, continues to tear away the livelihoods of America's and Nebraska's working men and women. The numbers according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics has risen to 2.6 million working people who lost their jobs in the last year and the crisis continues to deepen. The numbers are a bleak reminder of the urgency of federal action to lift the unemployed – and a sharp rebuke to the President and Republicans in Congress who blocked meaningful relief before leaving Washington, D. C. for the holidays.

Working men and women are already paying a price, between September and December of 2001, more than three quarters of a million workers (768,000) have exhausted their unemployment benefits.

The concept of economic stimulus, which lawmakers agreed to after September 11, was supposed to embody the principles of temporary and immediate action to get the economy moving and care for workers hit by the recession became hostage to the obsessive drive for corporate tax cuts.

The problem started at the top. President Bush never made worker relief a priority for economic stimulus. In October the President recommended a plan with new tax cuts and tax breaks which were four times greater than the benefits for working men and women, signaling an emphasis on a corporate agenda at the expense of unemployed workers and real economic recovery. That plan set the stage for the House to introduce its \$100 million tax-bloated bill which completely failed to address the recession and the growing unemployment crisis.

Throughout the debate, senators who supported real economic stimulus legislation remained committed to the core principles of extended and expanded unemployment; a minimum 75% health insurance subsidy; aid directly to the state to help meet the looming financial crisis in many states; and, federal spending for infrastructure jobs.

As Congress concluded the 2001 session, it became clear that the President and House

Republicans supported measures to make permanent and even retroactive tax cuts and opposed anything greater than superficial reforms for worker relief.

The Labor Movement must continue to demand that when Congress returns on January 23, 2002 it takes up and passes a meaningful relief for laid-off workers; aid to states; and, an infrastructure jobs program.

2002 UNION-INDUSTRIES SHOW SALUTES 'AMERICA'S HEROES': AFL-CIO'S WORKING FAMILIES

The 2002 Union-Industries Show in Minneapolis this Spring will be "A salute to America's Heroes" The Working Families of the AFL-CIO". The 2002 theme celebrates "both the day-to-day contributions that working families make to the welfare of our economy by producing the best products and services on earth, as well as the special efforts that we have all been making every day in the new atmosphere that confronts us since 9/11", declared Union Label and Service Trades Department (UL&STD) President Charles Mercer.

The Show will officially open at noon • Friday • April 5 running through 7:00 P.M. • Monday • April 8. As has been the tradition in recent years, the Show will hold a special early hours preview for local students as a result of a collaboration between the Department and the Education Minnesota, the statewide teachers' union formed in a merger between the Minnesota American Federation of Teachers and the Minnesota Education Association.

"The newly expanded Minneapolis Convention Center offers a terrific venue for the displays of the 400-plus exhibitors", said Dennis Kivikko, Show Manager and Secretary-Treasurer of the UL&STD.

Minneapolis to Host Union Label Conference

The 2002 Unions Label Conference – for union label activists from U.S. cities and states – will be held on Saturday, April 6, 2002 in Minneapolis. The session convenes on the second day of the Union Industries Show.

Details for the Conference – the agenda and information on hotel reservations – will be available early this year. Forms to register are now available through the UL&STD.

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

James M. Tylski

In times of national crisis, it is of vital importance to ask whether it is smart public policy to reward profitable corporate campaign contributors with enormous tax breaks. Large corporations are pushing, with the power of hundreds of millions of dollars in campaign contributions behind them, for new tax breaks. Unfortunately for the general public, this "economic boost" comes with consequences. The White House is already proposing lists of possible cuts in social programs. Ordinary Americans, the majority of whom cannot afford to augment their vote at the polling booth with a campaign contribution, are being asked to sacrifice to serve the national interest.

The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy's October 2000 study of 250 large, profitable companies found that they saved \$98 billion between 1996 and 1998 from special tax breaks. More than half of that \$98 billion went to just 41 companies who averaged more than a billion dollars each in tax relief. Twenty-three companies qualified for so many tax breaks that they actually got tax rebates in 1998. Coincidentally, the top tax avoiding companies contributing more than \$150.2 million from 1991 through June 2001 to federal candidates and parties, also saved \$55 billion in taxes over three years alone. The House Ways and Means and Senate Finance Committee, also collected \$9.7 million from 1991 through June 2001 from executives, their families, and PAC's associated with top tax avoiding corporations.

When profitable, corporate America gets these breaks, the working families have to pay for them. This is achieved by making ordinary taxpayers either pay higher taxes to make up for what corporate America does not pay, or by getting fewer government services. Federal programs providing for domestic security, education, health care, unemployment benefits, environmental protection and other important public services may be short changed, or eliminated all together.

Since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the tax code has been back in the news. Now, it is being used as part of White House and Congressional Republican efforts to exploit our current economic troubles as the rationale to enact huge new tax breaks for corporations and the wealthy.

If giving the huge new tax breaks for corporations and the wealthy would create not just a liveable wage, but a wage working families can live and support their families on, supporting these motions would be an

obvious choice. But we have seen that, the loss of jobs has already started to swell with this quiet form of corporate welfare, and most American families are struggling to keep solvent. Yet there are those who would now like to give these large corporations, without any discipline or accountability, further new huge tax breaks.

Welcome New Affiliates

The officers and members of the Nebraska State AFL-CIO wishes to welcome the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) 311, American Postal Workers Union (APWU) 845, Lincoln Building and Construction Trades; and, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) 61 Retirees.

We welcome Leland H. Buescher, President, APWU 311; Cathy Ruffing, President, APWU 845; Mike Pitz, President, Lincoln Building and Construction Trades; and, Mary Buchholz, President, AFSCME 61 Retirees; their officers and members into the house of Labor in the state of Nebraska.

APWU 311 represents the postal workers in Hastings; APWU 845 represents the postal workers in Scottsbluff; Lincoln Building and Construction Trades represents the affiliated construction trade unions in Lincoln; and, AFSCME 61 Retirees represent the retirees throughout the state.

Local Unions Suspended

Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) 45, Nebraska have been suspended by the Nebraska State AFL-CIO for becoming 12 months in arrears in per capita tax payments to the Nebraska State AFL-CIO.

The Nebraska AFL-CIO encourages OPEIU 45, to correct their suspension and become a local union in good standing with the Nebraska State AFL-CIO.

16th Annual Legislative Conference

The Nebraska State AFL-CIO will be hosting the 16th Annual Legislative Conference February 12 and February 13, 2002 at the Holiday Inn Downtown • 141 North Ninth Street (9th & "P" Streets) • Lincoln, Nebraska.

The Conference will start on Tuesday with registration from 7:30 A.M. - 9:30 A.M. followed by a morning legislative workshop; lunch with the Senator's at Noon; an afternoon workshop; and a reception that evening in the Red Room in the Lower Level.

Wednesday morning we will start with a breakfast in the convention Ballroom and then depart for the Capital to lobby your senator. **Please contact your senator and ask them to attend the luncheon with you on Tuesday and to set up a time to discuss labor's bill's at the Capitol on Wednesday.**

Official publication of the Nebraska State AFL-CIO published quarterly.
Affiliated organizations are asked to contribute articles for the newsletter.
Articles should be sent to Nebraska State AFL-CIO, 5418 South 27th Street, #1, Omaha, NE 68107-3492, 402-734-1300, Fax 402-734-1205.

Conference and Delegate Registration Form are to be filled out and returned to our office with payment by **Tuesday, February 5, 2002**. The cost will be **\$30 per delegate**. Feel free to duplicate the form as needed.

A block of rooms have been reserved in the Nebraska State AFL-CIO Legislative Conference name. To reserve a room(s) please call direct to the Holiday Inn Downtown at 402-475-4011 or 800-432-0002. The room rate is: **\$79 plus 9½% tax**.

PARKING There is a parking garage at the Holiday Inn Downtown for \$5.95 per day. If that garage is full and you cannot find a place on the street, additional parking can be found at the Market Place Garage • 10th & Q Streets for \$5.50 per day.

2002 COPE Convention

The 2002 Committee on Political Education (COPE) Convention will be held March 23 and March 24, 2002 at the Ramada Inn • 301 Second Avenue • Kearney, Nebraska. The Central Nebraska Central Labor Council will be the host central labor council for the COPE Convention.

Registration fee is **\$30 per delegate**. Registration Form is to be filled out and returned to our office with payment by **Wednesday, March 13, 2002**.

The purpose of the COPE Convention is limited to making endorsements for U.S. Senate; U.S. House; Nebraska State Constitutional Offices; Nebraska State Senators (even numbered districts, Legislative District 7, and Legislative District 41); other state offices; and, any Constitutional Amendments on the ballot.

The Nebraska State AFL-CIO cannot over-emphasize the importance of the COPE Convention and having a full delegation from all affiliated local unions and organizations in attendance.

2002 Per Capita

Effective January 1, 2002 affiliated local unions or lodges shall pay a monthly per capita tax payment of seventy cents (70¢) on all dues paying members of the local union or lodge to the Nebraska State AFL-CIO.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION AND WORKERS COMPENSATION BENEFITS INCREASE

Effective January 1, 2002 the new maximum amounts of weekly benefits will be as follows:
Workers' Compensation • Effective 1/1/02 • \$528
Unemployment Compensation • Effective 1/1/02 • \$262

HILGERT LEAVES LEGISLATURE

Senator John Hilgert, representing Legislative District 7 in Omaha, resigned from the Legislature in December 2001 to become head of the State Department of Veterans Affairs.

Hilgert stated the decision to leave the Legislature was not a easy decision, but personal finances was a factor in leaving the legislative job for a higher paying state position.

The Nebraska State AFL-CIO wishes John the best in his future job. We will miss his support, voice, and cooperation on issues which effect the working men and women throughout Nebraska.

Governor Johanns has appointed John Synowiecki to the vacancy in Legislative District 7. John is a lifetime resident of south Omaha and is a former probation officer for the state. He not only is the new Senator for Legislative District 7, but he will have to run in the 2002 election cycle for the district.

The Nebraska State AFL-CIO looks forward to working with John on issues and concerns during this legislative session. We have always had an outstanding relationship with senators from Legislative District 7 and we look forward to a continued relationship with John.

POLL SHOWS OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSE TO LAYOFFS

Most Americans, regardless of political affiliations, strongly support new programs for low-wage workers hurt by the current economic slowdown, according to a national poll taken in October 2001 for the non-profit group, Jobs for the Future.

Conducted by Lake Snell Perry and Associates, the poll surveyed 803 Americans in October and found most Americans want to help vulnerable workers by:

- Making it easier for laid-off workers to keep their health coverage – 72% strongly support and 19% somewhat support;
- Increasing funding for education and training so displaced workers can get better jobs when the economy improves – 88% strongly support and 30% somewhat support;
- Creating temporary work programs for the unemployed in needed areas like school and road construction – 55% strongly support and 29% somewhat support;
- Increasing unemployment benefits to allow displaced workers to live above the poverty level – 46% strongly support and 30% somewhat support; and,
- Extending unemployment benefits over a longer period – 37% strongly support and 28% somewhat support.

The poll found broad-based public support for these ideas, with majorities of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans favoring these policies. For more information on the poll, visit www.jff.org.

AFFILILATE NEWS

2001 NALC Food Drive

On May 12, 2001 letter carriers collected a record 70.1 million pounds of food donations along their postal routes throughout the nation in the ninth annual "Stamp Out Hunger" food drive and delivered it to community food banks and pantries to help the needy.

Final tabulation of results from the May 12 drive by over 1,500 National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) local branches in all 50 states and U.S. jurisdictions showed 70,123,161 pounds of non-perishable food collected, eclipsing by nearly seven million pounds the previous record of 63.2 million pounds in 2000.

The donations from postal customers was augmented by a contribution of one million pounds of canned goods from the Campbell Soup Company.

NALC President, Vincent R. Sombrotto praised the millions of American families who generously left food by their mailboxes, as well as the thousands of letter carriers, other postal employees and volunteers who collected, sorted and delivered it to local food banks and pantries.

"Millions of children and adults who face hunger every day will have a better summer because of the donations from our postal customers", Sombrotto added.

Sombrotto expressed appreciation to those that provided special support for the drive including the U.S. Postal Service and its Priority Mail division, Campbell's Soup, the Saturn-United Auto Workers Union Partnership Initiative, local United Ways, the AFL-CIO and cartoonist Bil Keane, who provided a special "Family Circus" drawing to promote the drive.

UFCW 271

United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) District Union 271 has been in a major organizing program of the packing house workers in eastern Nebraska. This program began in the summer of 2000. To date we have organized the maintenance workers ConAgra Beef and all of the workers at Armour Swift Eckrich (Cudahy). Both of these facilities have three year contracts in effect.

UFCW 271 had an election the with the Nebraska Beef employees in 2001. As a result of this election 41 unfair labor practice charges were filed with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Francis Molenda, hearing officer for the NLRB, heard the charges in October, 2001. The hearing lasted six days. **Mr. Molenda has recommended that the Board set aside the election held on August 16, 2001 of the Nebraska Beef workers and ordered that a new election be held.** Nebraska Beef has appealed Mr. Molenda's ruling to the Regional NLRB

Director of the 17th Regional Office. With Mr. Molenda's ruling, it is very possible that the workers of Nebraska Beef plant will have a new election within the next couple of months.

Donna McDonald, President, UFCW 271, reports continuing efforts are being made to organize all of the packing houses. "If there is an industry that needs to be organized, it is definitely the packing houses. These workers are probably the most exploited and are being denied daily what labor has struggled throughout the years to achieve." McDonald also says she hopes 2002 is even more successful than 2001.

APWU Local News

Postal workers get contract – Federal arbitrators on December 18 announced a new three-year contract between Postal Workers and the U.S. Postal Service. The pact was sent to arbitration when the two sides were unable to reach an agreement. The settlement given the 340,000 postal clerks, maintenance workers, and motor vehicle drivers a 4.4% wage increase over three years; a lump sum payment of \$499; and, cost-of-living increases in the second and third years.

Railroaders News

The U.S. Senate on December 5, 2001 passed the Railroad Retirement and Survivors Act which will reform and modernize the Railroad Retirement System. The legislation passed by a bi-partisan vote of 90-9. Nebraska U.S. Senators Hagel and Nelson supported and voted in favor of the Act.

Thousands of railroad employees, retirees, spouses, and survivors will be affected by this much-needed legislation, as it reforms, strengthens and modernizes the Railroad Retirement System so railroad workers and their families can enjoy the same type of benefits many private sector and federal government employees receive.

The Railroad Retirement and Survivors Improvement Act does the following:

- Establishes a Railroad Retirement Investment Trust Fund;
- Increases survivor benefits;
- Lowers the minimum retirement age from 62 to 60; and,
- Reduces the number of years an employee is required to serve in order to become vested in the retirement program from 10 to 5.

BuyUnionNOW.com

BuyUnionNOW.com sells ONLY Union-made, American made products.

Have you ever tried finding a union-made, American-made produce only to be frustrated because it's virtually impossible without wasting the better part of a day shopping? Be frustrated no more!

BuyUnionNOW.com is a great way to purchase needed gifts. It's a fast, convenient way to buy union-made products in the privacy of your own home! Just log onto the Internet and go to: **BuyUnionNOW.com**.

BuyUnionNOW.com sells only union-made products. "With over 900 items in many different product categories, the choice of products available are growing weekly so please be patient and keep coming back," founder Chris Kuban urges. Kuban is a union member, as well as, a labor and Democratic activists. The firm is organized by UNITE 2698.

Each product listing includes the city and the state of where the product is made, as well as, the name of the union and the union local. BuyUnionNOW.com verifies each product.

The site is easy to use and all credit card information is collected on a safe and secure server. However, people can purchase in many ways such as sending a check or money order, by calling toll free at 866-Buy-Union (1-866-289-8646), by sending a fax, or by using a credit card.

"Our goal is simple: one-stop shopping for union-made products and services for union supporters," Kuban said. Some larger products are not on the site because they cannot be shipped directly to a consumer by the manufacturer. However, the company hopes to solve that problem sometime in the near future by creating a listing of ALL union products made in the U.S.A. and where to buy them.

Kuban said union members can notify BuyUnionNOW.com of union-made products that should be on the web site by e-mailing products@buyunionnow.com or calling 866-Buy-Union (1-866-289-8646).

"We'll try to get any and all union-made products on the site," Kuban said. He added that for the first time, companies will be able to see – in dollars and cents – just how valuable union families are with their buying power. "They've never really seen our purchasing power. This will get their attention, which can't hurt during negotiations," he added with a smile.

"The more we can demonstrate union workers' buying power the more job security we provide for union workers everywhere," he added. Already one firm who moved some production overseas has told Kuban that if their union-made products sell well on BuyUnionNOW.com's site, the company will consider bringing the plant back to the U.S.

Commit to logging on to BuyUnionNOW.com and actually BUYING UNION! Now it's truly EASY!

If you don't Buy Union NOW, Who will?

SOCIAL SECURITY

The Presidential Commission announced three (3) proposals which would allow workers to invest some of their Social Security taxes in the stock market in an effort to define the debate over the future of the country's largest and politically touchiest domestic program. The Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) say "NOT SO, as each path would lead to the same bad results – reduction of benefits, deep financial risks for all beneficiaries, and further jeopardy for minorities, persons with disabilities, women and low-income workers."

ARA President, George J. Kourpias, condemned the proposals, noting that "future issues – providing retirement security for baby boomers, enhanced benefits for women and protection for low-income workers – can be met within the content of the current system.

The Commission has tried to create a panic among seniors and their families, but America's retirees know better and will remember in November 2002 who their friends and defenders of Social Security really are.

Although the Presidential Commission endorsed the concept of voluntary personal accounts invested in stocks, it did not agree on a single plan.

The proposed three (3) proposals would do the following:

Plan 1 – Allows workers to redirect two percent (2%) of their payroll taxes to a personal account and reduces their traditional Social Security benefit by a set amount.

Plan 2 – Allows workers to redirect four percent (4%) of their payroll taxes, up to \$1,000, to a personal account.

Plan 3 – Requires workers to contribute an additional one percent (1%) of wages to a personal account and matches that with part of the payroll tax.

President Bush's Social Security Privatization Commission represents Wall Street, not working families. He packed his Commission with financial, industry, and corporate executives, as well as, right-wing ideologies and retired politicians, not a single representative of working families.

- For far too many people, Social Security's monthly benefit makes up all or most of their income in retirement. Nearly two-thirds of older Americans count on Social Security for half or more of their income in retirement. One in four older unmarried women (the widowed, divorced, and never married) count on it for all of their income. Two out of five African American seniors and Latino seniors count on Social Security for all of their retirement income. These families need more for Social Security, not less.

- Social Security is so important because most people do not have substantial pensions from their employers, and their savings are very modest. Fewer than half of all families have any kind of retirement savings account, and among those lucky enough to have one, half have less than \$24,000 in it. As employers continue to cut back on real pensions, retirement security is likely to decline for working families.

- All working families need a guaranteed benefit they can count on in retirement. That's one of the most important lesson from the recent bankruptcy of the Enron Corporation. Thousands of workers at Enron have seen their 401(k) retirement accounts go up in smoke as the company stock they invested in has become virtually worthless.

U.S. HOUSE APPROVES FAST TRACK BY ONE VOTE

The U.S. House has approved fast-track trade legislation on a 215-214 vote in which the White House and the Texas-based Republican leadership used every trick in the book to squeeze out the final votes.

If approved by the Senate, the measure would allow George W. Bush to negotiate trade treaties without amendment by Congress. Congress would only be able to vote proposed treaties up or down. Bush has said he hopes to expand the North American Free Trade Agreement concept into an agreement that covers the Western Hemisphere.

Congress denied President Bill Clinton fast-track negotiating authority. Organized labor opposes fast track, arguing that it is a tool to enable a race to the bottom in which the worst labor standards and poorest environmental controls win out in the manufacture of goods.

That theory has proven out in reports that maquiladoras in Mexico, popularized as manufacturing plants for American companies after the NAFTA treaty took effect, are laying off thousands of Mexican workers so those same companies can take their operations to Far Eastern venues where labor is even cheaper than the \$1 - \$1.50 per hour going rate in Mexico.

The Nebraska U.S. Representatives – Doug Bereuter, Lee Terry, and Tom Osborne – all voted for fast track and against organized labor.

The vote came despite a heroic grass-roots organizing effort by labor and a number of allied organizations. Union members placed thousands of calls to members of Congress by way of a toll-free number set up by the national AFL-CIO.

News reports state that the Republican House leadership extended the fast track vote from the ordinary 15 minutes to 38 minutes after the voting board showed 215 votes against and 210 for. Speaker Dennis Hastert, Majority Leader Dick Armey of Texas and Majority Whip Tom DeLay of Texas won over a handful of Republicans from textile states with a letter promising additional protection for dyeing and finishing companies.

Because this blew up the alleged anti-protectionism principle on which the bill was written, the sponsor, Rep. William Thomas, R-California, nearly pulled the bill down before the leadership prevailed on him to move forward.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported, "In winning this battle, the pro-trade forces may have lost the larger war. Trade has traditionally been a bipartisan issue, moved by moderates in both parties. . . By forcing through a bill tailored narrowly to Republicans, the Bush administration may have alienated pro-trade

Democrats who will be needed the next time a trade deal comes up for approval."

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney thanked union members for their work in opposing the bill and declared, "Now we must look ahead. We must decide how to deal with the Democrats and Republicans who abandoned their working family constituents – many of whom supported them in their most recent elections. And we must thank those who stood firm in the face of enormous pressure."

REAL AMERICAN FLAGS MADE BY ANNIN IN THE USA

Members of the UFCW's Textile and Garment Council manufacture U.S. flags for Annin & Co., the oldest and largest manufacturer of American flags in the U.S., at two of the company's five plants. But, the company and its unionized employees are competing with foreign producers capable of producing U.S. flags at a fraction of Annin's costs.

The Council's units are at Annin's two New Jersey factories. Other Annin factories, including one which was recently acquired by the company, are not organized.

Annin has accelerated its schedules in order to maximize output in the face of soaring demand for the flag. And, it is competing directly against companies such as those in China spotlighted in a recent article in *The Washington Post*.

A Chinese management official interviewed in that article noted: "Right now, no one around the world can really compete with us as flag makers. We have good machines and rock bottom labor costs."

Chinese producers sell medium-sized U.S. flags to U.S. distributors for about \$1 a piece, according to press reports.

Annin does not sell its products directly to the public. It has a retail dealer network of several thousand outlets throughout the U.S. The company promises that a list of its retail distributors is on the way via its website: www.annin.com.

Important Telephone Numbers

Nebraska Workers' Compensation Court:

1-800-599-5155 within Nebraska; and
1-402-471-6468 in the Lincoln area and out-of-state

State Capitol:

1-888-685-3704 within Nebraska; and
1-402-471-2311 in the Lincoln area and out-of-state

H.R. 1322 – RETIREE HEALTH BENEFITS

H.R. 1322, the Emergency Retiree Health Benefits Protection Act of 2001 was introduced by Representative John F. Tierney (D-MA).

As of today, no law required employers to offer retiree health benefits, but if those benefits are offered and promised as a condition of employment, a law should exist, as it does for pensions, requiring employers to keep their commitments. H.R. 1322 would amend the 1974 Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) Law by adding a new section which would provide safeguards for retiree health benefit plans after retirement. It will close the loophole which allows corporations to walk away from their health care commitments and force the retiree and taxpayers to pick up the tab.

Workers have worked their lifetime to achieve these "defined" benefits and many employers are cutting benefits and building huge pension plan surpluses with the funds that were long earmarked to pay retiree benefits. In some instances, these funds are being wrongfully used to allow top executives to award themselves multi-million dollar bonuses.

H.R. 1322 would stem a national crisis affecting millions of retirees. Many retirees are being forced to mortgage their retirements and in some cases decide which meal to skip just to meet skyrocketing co-payments or out-of-pocket costs for medications and care. H.R. 1322 would prohibit cancellations or reductions of healthcare benefits promised at retirement.

Following is a summary of H.R. 1322:

- Emergency Retiree Health Benefits Protection Act of 2001 – Amends ERISA of 1974 to provide emergency protection for retiree health benefits.
- Prohibits group health plans from making post-retirement reductions of retiree benefits.
 - Requires group health plans to adopt provisions barring post-retirement reductions in retiree health benefits.
 - Requires group health plans to restore benefits reduced after retirement. Authorizes the Secretary of Labor to waive or vary such requirements, if a plan sponsor applies for such exemption, upon finding that compliance would 1) be adverse to the interests of plan participants in the aggregate; 2) not be administratively feasible; 3) cause substantial business hardship to the sponsor.
 - Establishes the Emergency Retiree Health Loan Guarantee Program and its Board. Authorizes the Program, through its Board, to guarantee loans provided by private banking and investment institutions to be eligible plan sponsors to assist them in meeting obligations under this Act to restore benefits reduced after retirement.
 - Authorizes the Secretary to access civil penalties for violations of this Act.

The Nebraska State AFL-CIO asks affiliated organizations and retiree clubs to notify their membership about H.R. 1322 and to ask them to send letters and make phone calls to their Congressman to co-sponsor this important legislation.

The Nebraska Representatives in Congress are as follows:

The Honorable Douglas E. Bereuter
First District
2184 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-2701
Phone: 202-225-4806
Fax: 202-226-1148

Lincoln District Congressional Office -
Cornhusker Plaza
301 South 13th Street, #100
P. O. Box 82887
Lincoln, NE 68508-2887
Phone: 402-438-1598

Fremont District Office -
P. O. Box 377
Fremont, NE 68025
Phone: 402-727-0888

The Honorable Lee Terry
Second District
1513 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-2702
Phone: 202-225-4155
Fax: 202-225-5452
E-Mail: Talk2Lee@mail.house.gov

Omaha -
11640 Arbor Street, #100
Omaha, NE 68144
Phone: 402-397-9944
Fax: 402-397-8787

The Honorable Tom Osborne
Third District
507 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-2703
Phone: 202-225-6435
Fax: 202-226-1385

Grand Island -
819 North Diers Avenue, #3
Grand Island, NE 68803
Phone: 308-381-5555
Fax: 308-381-5557

Scottsbluff -
21 East 20th Street
Scottsbluff, NE 69361
Phone: 308-635-3049
Fax: 308-635-3049

AFL-CIO UNION PRIVILEGE PROGRAM

Help For Laid Off Union Members

Since September, some 500,000 workers have lost their jobs. If members in your area have been impacted by layoffs, you know they need all the help they can get. That's why Union Privilege is offering special help to unemployed or underemployed workers who participate in the Union Plus Benefits Program.

The special help includes a Layoff Helpline for members who have a Union Plus Credit Card or Loan and are experiencing a temporary or permanent layoff. When a member calls the Helpline, they will speak with a specialist who will evaluate their situation and determine the best short or long-term solution to help them during this difficult time. The phone numbers for program participants are:

- Union Plus Credit Card Layoff Helpline: 1-800-551-2873
- Union Plus Loan Program Layoff Helpline: 1-800-365-1328

Members who have mortgage through the Union Plus Mortgage and Real Estate program will receive special consideration for late fees and other matters related to loan payments. Through the Union Plus Mortgage Assistance Program, interest-free loans are available to help members make their mortgage payments. Additional considerations are available on a case-by-case basis. For more information, members should call 1-800-846-6466.

For free and discounted legal services, encourage members to contact the Union Plus Legal Service at 1-800-993-8886.

With the Union Plus Health Savings Program, members without health insurance coverage can save an average of 25% on physician charges. Discounts are also available on retail and mail order prescription drugs, vision, hearing and foot and ankle care services. A small annual fee of \$14.95 covers the entire family. For more information, your members should call 1-800-228-3523.

AFL-CIO Community Services Liaisons and Labor Agencies can get more information the special help available to members who are laid off by visiting www.unionprivilege.org or calling the Union Privilege Leader Line at 1-800-472-2005.

USA LABELS TOUGHER TO FIND ON SHOES

Shoppers looking to spend their dollars on goods carrying the "Made in the USA" label could get sore feet if they're seeking shoes that carry it.

A wave of closings of shoe factories in recent years means well-known brands like G.H. Bass and Cole Haan, both tied to Maine, are now made overseas.

And just when it seemed domestic production couldn't sink much lower, Dexter, Saucony and Eastland are shuttering their plants in the nation's easternmost state.

"For all intents and purposes, this type of manufacturing in Maine is dead. The handwriting is on the wall," said Bob Simpson, town manager in Dexter, where Dexter Shoe Co. is laying off nearly 500 workers.

Maine's shoe industry is only a shadow of what it once was: The number of jobs peaked at nearly 27,000 in 1968 and now stands at about 3,500. Nationally, the shoe industry has gone from 235,000 jobs in 1972 to 28,000, the U.S. Labor Department reported.

An industry in which 98% of shoes were made in the United States in the late 1960's has undergone a complete reversal, with more than 90% of shoes now imported from abroad.

"While the United States isn't expected to cede all shoe production to other countries, the latest plant closings show the slide in domestic production is ongoing," said Bill Boettge of the National Shoe Retailers Association.

Joining Dexter, Saucony and Eastland in announcing closing of plants over the past year were Converse in North Carolina; Lacrosse Footwear in Wisconsin and, Rocky Shoes and Boots in Ohio.

These days, shoppers are finding fewer and fewer shoes made in the United States. More likely, the shoes are made in China, Indonesia, Mexico or any number of countries with cheaper labor.

"China manufactures more shoes than any other place in the history of the world. We'll never go to war against China because we'll be barefoot," said John Stollenwerk of Allen-Edmonds, a manufacturer of high-end men's shoes that has four plants in Wisconsin and Maine.

The reason for the plant closings is that the shoe industry remains a labor-intensive business despite strides in automation. Dozens of pairs of hands touch most shoes before they're boxed and sold.

THE CHARLESTON 5 FREE AT LAST

Charleston, South Carolina, November 13, 2001 –

In a triumph for workers' rights and free speech, the case against the three remaining union dockworkers known as the Charleston 5 was resolved today. For nearly two years, false charges of felony rioting and conspiracy to riot hung over the heads of Elijah Ford, Ricky Simmons, and Peter Washington. At a brief hearing, they appeared before Charleston Circuit Court Judge Vic Rawl and pled no contest to low level misdemeanor charges of participating in a nonviolent "riot, rout or affray" and paid fines of \$100 each. The pleas are not admissions of guilt. Each of the three are members International Longshoremen's Association Local 1422. The cases of Kenneth Jefferson, also of ILA 1422, and Jason Edgerton of ILA 1771 were concluded in a similar manner on November 7.

The charges against the Charleston 5 arose from a January 20, 2000 legal union protest against nonunion workers unloading a Danish freighter at the Port of Charleston. On their way to the port, about 150 dockworkers from ILA 1422 and ILA 1771 were confronted by a contingent of more than 600 police officials. A fracas broke out and eight union members were arrested and charged by local officials with minor offenses. But South Carolina Attorney General Charlie Condon intervened and, securing indictments of felony rioting and conspiracy to riot from a secret grand jury, took personal control of the prosecution of five of the dockworkers. These latter charges carry heavy prison terms.

The conclusion of the case against the Charleston 5 is a vindication of five courageous dockworkers who, with their families, endured a year and a half of court imposed curfews where they were prohibited from leaving their homes between the hours of 7:00 P.M. and 7:00 A.M. except to go to work or to union meetings. It is a testament to the unified struggle of a broad coalition of unions, support committees, faith communities, and civil rights organizations from across the country that supported the Charleston 5. And it is a victory over the abuse of state power. Attorney General Condon, charges with prosecutorial misconduct, removed himself from the case, and the unjust charges he brought against the dockworkers were thrown out by the court. Finally, by prevailing in this case, the Charleston 5 defended free speech and the right to protest in South Carolina, fundamental principles upon which American was founded.

KENT I. FRAZER DIES

March 28, 1942 - December 11, 2001

The Nebraska State AFL-CIO is saddened to announce the death of Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) Commissioner, Kent I. Frazer who passed away at his home December 11, 2001.

The Nebraska State AFL-CIO extends its deepest sympathy to Kent's wife, Marti, and his family.

LABOR

Author Unknown

I built your ships and I sailed them
I worked in your mills and your mines,
I sweat o'er your network of railroads,
I crushed the ripe grapes for your wine.

I toiled weaving cloth for your garments
I gathered the grain for your bread,
My hands made your beautiful mansions,
I printed the books you have read.

I linked two great oceans together
I spanned your rivers with steel,
Faced death in your lofty skyscrapers,
I built your automobiles.

I harnessed the mad rush of waters
and caged lighting bolts for your play,
I made your words leap over distance,
I lighted your nights into day.

Wherever there's progress, you'll find me
Without me the world could not live,
And yet you would seek to destroy me,
With the pittance you give.

Today you may grind me in slavery
You may dictate to me from your throne;
But tomorrow I'll throw off the fetters
And stand forth to claim what I own.

You masters of field and of workshop
I am mighty and you are few.
No longer I'll bow in submission
I AM LABOR, AND ASK FOR MY DUE!!!

FIRST QUARTER 2002 RAFFLE/LOTTERY CALENDAR WINNERS

January

Daily Winners - \$25 each

BCTGM 50G, Omaha
GCIU 543M, Omaha
IBEW 265, Lincoln
IBEW 265, Lincoln
Lincoln CLU, Lincoln
Northeast Nebraska CLC, Fremont
The Kern's, Omaha
Greg Andrade, Bellevue
Mike Bell, Lincoln
Thomas Blankman, Plattsmouth
Mike L. Cohen, Lincoln
IBEW 2366
Community Service, Lincoln
Jeanine Dunn, Omaha
Laura H. Dussetschleger, Omaha
Carmen Hacht; Sioux City, IA
Steven R. Hartmann, Seward
Elaine Ignowski, Omaha
Vickie Kuiper, Omaha
Margaret Mahoney, Bellevue
Mike Marty, Fremont
Mardy McCullough, Lincoln
Debbie Mostek, Omaha
Robert Nawrocki; Council Bluffs, IA
Joe Nowak, Omaha
Cindy Scharton, Lincoln
Leo Sova, Omaha
Michael J. Thiellen, Alliance
Todd Trapp, Omaha
Todd Trapp, Omaha
Tim Voss, Fremont
Eugene C. Wills, Ashland

Weekly Winners - \$50 each

Dan Krause, Lincoln
John Quirk, Hastings
Timothy Schamber, Omaha
Jason VanSchoiack, Lincoln

Monthly Winner - \$100 each

Steve Braunsroth, Lincoln

Special Day Winner - \$500 each

Thomas E. Bartlett, Omaha

February

Daily Winners - \$25 each

IBEW 265, Lincoln
IBEW 265, Lincoln
UA 16, Omaha
UFCW271, Omaha
Roy Bauer, Crete
Sue Davis, Ralston
Leo A. DeWitt, Jr.; Omaha
Sue Dudzik, Omaha
Lew Ellingson; Parker, CO
Butch Fox, Lincoln
Jerie L. Gay, Omaha
Rick Gilinsky, Omaha
Rick Graim; Bancroft, MI
Rich Hazuka, Omaha
Linda Henry, Omaha
Dan Krause, Lincoln
Dick Lewis, Adams
Mike Matulka, Valpraiso
Kristi Maupin, Omaha
Frank Merchant, Omaha
Mary & Bill Muck, Ainsworth
Ron Povondra, Omaha
Barbara Shaw, Omaha
Daniel D. Smith, Omaha
Ronald R. Smith, Omaha
Diane Waltke, Bennet
Diane Waltke, Bennet
Michael Zgud, Kearney

Weekly Winners - \$50 each

IBEW 265, Lincoln
Gary Rupp, North Platte
Mark Simpson, Omaha
Michelle M. Thompson, Hickman

Monthly Winner - \$100 each

Jan, Glennon, Omaha

Special Day Winner - \$500 each

David Heidenreich, Omaha

March

Daily Winners - \$25 each

GCIU 221M, Lincoln
IUOE 571, Omaha
Roho, Omaha
UA 16, Omaha
Nebraska State AFL-CIO
Building Corp., Omaha
Nebraska State AFL-CIO
Building Corp., Omaha
UFCW22 General, Fremont
UFCW22 Grand Island Unit, Fremont
Earl I. Baker, North Platte
David Bayne, Lincoln
Dick Conn, Omaha
Mike Dittmore, Plattsmouth
Dave Gillespie, Omaha
Carmen Hacht; Sioux City, IA
Bruce Hankins, Lincoln
Lori Hauck, Omaha
Theresa Johnson, Omaha
Tim LeClair; Sioux City, IA
Nancy Mahoney, Bellevue
Marcia Malone, Martell
Marsha McMahan, Bennet
Victor G. Meyers, Omaha
Don L. Neilsen, Fremont
Jerry Nice, Jr.; Wahoo
Gary Pegel; Council Bluffs, IA
Mike Royuk, Fremont
Johnny Schlepp, Fremont
Cleatress Scott, Omaha
Drexel J. Smith, North Platte
Ronald R. Smith, Omaha
Nebraska State Utility
Workers Council, Omaha

Weekly Winners - \$50 each

Craig Ackerman, Papillion
Mo Anker, Lincoln
Scott Colbert, Omaha
Harry Holden, Lincoln
Jim Straley, Omaha

Monthly Winner - \$100 each

Michael J. Thiellen, Alliance

Special Day Winner - \$500 each

Betty James, Omaha

WILLIAM BRENNAN INSTITUTE FOR LABOR STUDIES SPRING 2002 CLASSES

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Nebraska Workers' Compensation

Saturday, March 16, 2002

9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

Peter Kiewit Conference Center

1313 Farnam Street - Omaha

\$60 per person

Includes lunch, all materials, and a Certificate of Completion

Presentors

Attorneys - Tom, Mike, and Tim Dowd and John Lingo

Topics include --

- Update on Workers' Compensation Law
- What is a reportable work related injury/illness
- How and why different injuries/illnesses are classified
- What are your rights at work
- How to file and pursue a claim
- Evaluating a work injury claim
- When and why to use an attorney
- Preparing for and appearing at hearings
- Appeal procedures
- Rehabilitation and return to work programs

Chasing the American Dream

Third Annual Conference

Saturday, April 6, 2002

9:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.

SMWIA 3 Hall

3333 South 24th Street - Omaha

The days when most working families could work hard, play by the rules, and get ahead seem long gone. For many in America the "American Dream" was the hope that through hard work you could assure a better quality of life for your children. That hope is rapidly fading.

Forty years ago, the U.S. economy was moving toward creating jobs that paid enough to adequately support a family on one income; that allowed enough leisure to spend time to enjoy family and friends; and that provided for a comfortable retirement. These were all part of the "American Dream."

The ability of most working families to achieve that dream through hard work, and playing by the rules has rapidly faded. Today because of a decline in unions and deregulation, the average job in meatpacking and trucking now pay about half of what they did in thirty years ago.

UNO's William Brennan Institute for Labor Studies will sponsor a one-day conference April 6, 2002 dedicated to learning about what is wrong with our economy and what needs to be done to catch the fast disappearing "American Dream."

Collective Bargaining Preparation

Friday and Saturday -- April 19 and April 20, 2002

9:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.

Peter Kiewit Conference Center

1313 Farnam Street - Omaha

\$90 per person

Includes lunch, all materials, and a Certificate of Completion

Topics include --

- The legal framework of bargaining
- Gauging management's strength
- Developing clear contract proposals
- Classifying and prioritizing proposals
- Building membership support for negotiations
- Researching your employer
- The use of bargaining books
- Negotiating tactics to use at the table
- Effective use of the caucus

Effective Grievance Handling

Saturday, May 4, 2002

9:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.

Peter Kiewit Conference Center

1313 Farnam Street - Omaha

\$65 per person

Includes lunch, all materials, and a Certificate of Completion

Topics include --

- Recognition and evaluation of grievances
- Techniques of grievance investigation
- Duty of fair representation
- Seven tests for "just cause"
- Weingarten rights of the membership
- Arbitrator's guidelines for evaluating discipline grievances
- Oral and written grievance presentation skills

**For more information call the
Institute for Labor Studies
at 402-595-2344**

Nebraska State AFL-CIO
5418 South 27th Street, #1
Omaha, NE 68107-3492
402-734-1300

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2002 CALENDAR OF LABOR EVENTS

January 25, 2002
Albert W. Bauer Awards Banquet
Lincoln, Nebraska

February 12 and February 13, 2002
Nebraska State AFL-CIO
16th Annual Legislative Conference
Holiday Inn Downtown
Lincoln, Nebraska

February 18, 2002
President's Day Observed
Nebraska State AFL-CIO offices closed

March 2, 2002
Omaha Building and Construction
Trades Annual Chili Feed
IBEW 1974
Omaha, Nebraska

March 15, 2002
Deadline for Nebraska State AFL-CIO
Scholarship Application Forms

March 22, 2002
Executive Board Meeting
Ramada Inn
Kearney, Nebraska

March 23 and March 24, 2002
COPE Convention
Ramada Inn
Kearney, Nebraska

April 5 through April 8, 2002
AFL-CIO's Union Industries Show
Minneapolis, Minnesota

April 24, 2002
Administrative Professionals Day

April 28, 2002
Nebraska State AFL-CIO
Pancake Breakfast
Nebraska State AFL-CIO Building
Omaha, Nebraska

April 28, 2002
Workers' Memorial Day

May 27, 2002
Memorial Day
Nebraska State AFL-CIO offices closed

June 1, 2002
Nebraska State AFL-CIO
17th Annual 18-Hole Four Person
Best Ball Golf Tournament
Meadowlark Hills Golf Course
Kearney, Nebraska

2002 CALENDAR OF LEGISLATIVE AND POLITICAL DATES

February 15, 2002
Candidate filing deadline
for office holders

February 16, 2002
Patriot's Dinner
Lincoln, Nebraska

February 23, 2002
Holiday Inn Central
Douglas County
Truman Dinner
Omaha, Nebraska

March 1, 2002
Candidate filing deadline
for non-office holders

March 18, 2002
Sarpy County Democrats
Salute to State Senators
Farmer Brown's
Papillion, Nebraska

April 6, 2002
Jefferson Jackson Day Dinner
Lincoln, Nebraska

2002 Legislative Recess Days:
February: 1, 15, and, 18
March: 1, 4; 15; 18; and, 29
April: 1; 12; and, 15
Siné Die: Since the Speaker reserves
the right to schedule the 60th legislative
day, Siné Die will be either April 18 or
April 19

NEBRASKA STATE AFL-CIO SCHOLARSHIPS

The Nebraska State AFL-CIO offers six (6) annual scholarship of \$500 each. One (1) scholarship will be awarded in each of the six (6) central labor councils geographic areas in the state of Nebraska.

Members and/or dependents of members of Nebraska State AFL-CIO affiliated local unions are eligible to apply for these scholarships. The award can be used at any accredited college or university, public community college or established trade school.

Awards will be based on a written 750 (minimum) word essay on **Is There a Working Class in the United States Today? -- If there is a working class who is in it and who is not; or, if there is not a working classe what happened to it.** The essay must be typewritten, doubled spaced on 8½" X 11" white paper and a statement of career goal or intent.

Scholarship winners will be announced May 1, 2002 by the Nebraska State AFL-CIO.

Affiliated organizations, please notify your membership of the scholarship program. Feel free to duplicate the application or contact the Nebraska State AFL-CIO for additional applications.

PLEASE RETURN THE APPLICATION FORM TO THE NEBRASKA STATE AFL-CIO • 5418 SOUTH 27TH STREET, #1 • OMAHA, NE 68107-3492 BY MARCH 15, 2002.