

Labor Day 2005 Message Points

- This Labor Day, workers are facing the worst assault on good jobs and economic security in decades. Corporate America is driving down living standards while CEO pay soars. Anti-worker politicians defend giant corporations at workers' expense and attack bedrock family security programs such as Social Security. That's why this Labor Day, workers are standing up for good jobs and calling on employers and lawmakers to "Reward Work, Respect Workers."
- Workers and unions worked hard to win an economic norm with family-supporting wages, good benefits, respect for workers' freedom to form unions and opportunities for workplace advancement—a model that helped build and sustain America's middle class.
- That model is crumbling today as global pressures, rising health care costs and a push to privatize Social Security and eliminate pensions threaten good jobs in America.
- America's largest private employer, Wal-Mart, is a prime example of a corporation that's building a vastly different jobs model that is destroying America's middle class. Wal-Mart's model is based on inadequate health care and retirement benefits, low wages, attacks on workers' freedom to form unions and repeated violations of workplace rights.
- Working families cannot afford to allow the Wal-Mart model to become the standard for 21st century American jobs. And so this Labor Day, workers are speaking out against the Wal-Marting of America's workplaces. We will fight to ensure good jobs once again become the foundation of our communities.
- The challenges are great. Since 2001, we have lost more than 3 million manufacturing jobs—due in large part to trade deals without worker protections—and the quality of jobs has declined drastically. Average wages and benefits are shrinking in expanding industries.
- Meanwhile, workers are beating back attacks on our retirement security. Proposals to privatize Social Security and pension programs are facing tremendous opposition from working families. We must strengthen these retirement programs, not tear them down with costly schemes that will cut benefits and explode our deficit.

- Nearly 45 million Americans—most of them in working families—are without health insurance and the number of individuals with job-based health coverage has fallen. Workers are struggling to pay for rising health care premiums while our wages remain stagnant. The health care crisis is made worse when profitable corporations such as Wal-Mart deliberately shirk their responsibility to provide adequate employee health care coverage.
- And despite the fact 57 million Americans who don't have a union say they'd form one tomorrow if given the chance, too few ever get that opportunity. Employers routinely violate workers' freedom to have a union, and the laws are too weak to stop them. That's why we need to pass the Employee Free Choice Act, which would give workers a fair choice on having a union.
- And it's why America's union members are joining together with WORKING AMERICA members, a community affiliate of the AFL-CIO for workers who don't have the benefit of union membership, to build a better future for working families.
- Together, hundreds of thousands of workers will take part in Labor Day events and the Aug. 23–31 Labor Day 2005 Online Action Week to demand that America Reward Work, Respect Workers.
- This Labor Day, workers from all backgrounds—nurses, teachers, construction workers, service workers—will call on corporate America to provide good, family-supporting jobs with decent wages and affordable benefits and put elected leaders on notice: Stand up for good jobs with good benefits.