

## **Organizing: A Multi-Union Effort**

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*Nearly every day in the United States, working people from all walks of life are choosing to join unions so they can have a voice on the job to improve their lives and their communities:*

- Four million new members have joined the AFL-CIO unions since 1996—that's three times the rate of new organizing 10 years ago.
- 54 percent of nonmanagerial, nonunion workers would join a union tomorrow if they could, according to Peter D. Hart Research Associates—that's nearly 60 million workers.
- Before 1996, only one union devoted 30 percent of its resources to organizing. Today there are more than 20 unions actively engaged in a change-to-organize process.

### **Our New Plan for Growth**

To reverse the decline in union membership as a percentage of the workforce, unions must escalate our organizing efforts across the board. The lessons of the past nine years are clear: Investing financial resources in organizing is essential but it takes more than money to succeed. To sustain and accelerate growth, we also must invest in helping AFL-CIO unions develop top-level, strategic organizing capacity and we must invest in political mobilization for winning public policies that will open opportunities for organizing. Recent examples of this multifaceted approach include:

- In Illinois, more than 75,000 home care workers, child care workers and university graduate teaching assistants have gained a voice at work due to strategic campaigning and political mobilization efforts that resulted in public policy change;
- In partnership with the Teamsters, the AFL-CIO worked to recruit and train top-level researchers and campaigners to build the necessary strategic capacity that helped us successfully take on the world's largest printing company—Quebecor World;
- Throughout the country, unions have successfully organized more than 350,000 home care workers as a direct result of change in state government policies; and
- In a strategic organizing effort led by the AFL-CIO, the union movement and six affiliates changed the laws in Puerto Rico and successfully organized some 100,000 public employees.

### **Our New Organizing Plan**

**The AFL-CIO has proposed increasing capacity and resources for affiliate unions for organizing.** Such a plan to encourage successful organizing among affiliate unions is key to real growth—if all unions devoted 30 percent of their national union resources to organizing, that would produce an extra \$500 million from the national union level alone for growth.

#### **Key elements of the AFL-CIO plan include:**

- Creation of a \$22.5 million Strategic Organizing Fund. Two-thirds of the new Organizing Fund (\$15 million) will be set aside for an organizing incentive program that will encourage *more* unions to organize and one-third (\$7.5 million) will fund direct grants and subsidies for top-level, strategic organizing efforts that will enable these unions to organize more effectively.
- Establishing Industry Coordinating Committees for more strategic organizing. Unions representing workers in an industry, such as airlines or health care, would make joint,

strategic plans for helping workers organize in that industry, thus providing an important counterweight to today's highly consolidated corporate America. In addition, the AFL-CIO Constitution (Article XXI) would be changed to support this industry-wide organizing. Unions who represent workers in an industry would be required to participate on the committee.

- Supporting a major global campaign against Wal-Mart.
- A ramped up effort to change public policies to help restore workers' freedom to form unions, including training 100,000 worksite stewards to defend workers' freedom to form unions.
- Making changes to Article XX of the constitution to protect bargaining standards through the Industry Coordinating Committees. If a union violated the contract standards, that union, under certain conditions, could lose the right to be protected against organizing attempts by other unions at facilities covered by the contract standards.

### **Defending Workers' Freedom to Form Union**

Employers routinely deny workers their freedom to form unions—95 percent of employers actively fight their workers' efforts, and one-third illegally fire union supporters, according to Cornell University researcher Kate Bronfenbrenner.

The Employee Free Choice Act would go a long way to protect workers trying to form unions. When enacted, it will allow workers to form unions through a simple majority sign-up (also known as "card-check"), mandate first-contract arbitration if necessary to reach an agreement and provide real penalties for employers who violate the law.

On April 19, 2005, the Employee Free Choice Act was reintroduced as bipartisan legislation by Sens. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) and Reps. George Miller (D-Calif.) and Peter King (R-N.Y.). In the 108th Congress, 210 members of the House of Representatives (8 shy of a majority) and nearly a majority in the Senate supported this legislation, initiated by the AFL-CIO.