

Good Jobs for America's Workers

Submitted by the AFL-CIO Executive Council

We Stand for Good Jobs
Freedom to Form Unions
Fair Wages and Fair Treatment on the Job
Safe, Secure and Healthy Workplaces
Meeting the Dual Demands of Work and Family
Supporting Workers Through Education and Training and a
Strong Unemployment Compensation System

AS WE MEET HERE IN CHICAGO 50 years after the merger of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations, we do not look backward to what has been, but ahead, to where our nation is going and to the challenges that we, a movement of and for working people, must meet and conquer together. The moment calls on us to reaffirm what we stand for and what we will fight for.

We stand for—and together will fight for—good jobs for America's working families.

We stand for jobs that support families and communities, that pay decent wages and that provide good health care and retirement benefits. We will fight for jobs in which workers can freely exercise their right to form unions and bargain collectively. We demand jobs that ensure fair and nondiscriminatory treatment, that are safe and healthy, that give workers the flexibility and resources they need to nurture their families and that provide them with skills and opportunities for advancement.

We Stand for Good Jobs

Today, the future of jobs in America is frighteningly different from what our predecessors faced 50 years ago. Then, the jobs model adopted by leading employers meant family-supporting wages, good benefits, recognition and respect for the institutions of worker organizing and collective bargaining and opportunities for workplace advancement. It is a model that helped build and sustain the greatest middle class the world has ever known.

That model seems to be crumbling today, as global pressures, rampant anti-unionism, rising health care and retirement costs and a host of other conditions threaten good jobs in America.

Meanwhile, America's modern-day corporate giant and largest private employer, Wal-Mart, has come to symbolize a vastly different jobs model, one based on inadequate health care and retirement benefits, low wages, an all-out assault on workers' freedom to form unions and unrepentant violations of workplace rights. Instead of dedicating more of its enormous profit to creating good jobs, Wal-Mart exhorts other retailers to join it in a race to the bottom:

“What we need to ask our competitors,” says a Wal-Mart spokesperson, is “[c]an they be more efficient? Can they live more frugally? Is paying people \$15 to \$17 [to stock shelves] realistic?”

Wal-Mart-style jobs are not good for America or for America’s workers. We cannot afford to allow the Wal-Mart model to become the standard for 21st century American jobs. And so, we fight: We fight against the spread of lousy jobs and for good jobs that pay well, provide family-supporting benefits and respect workers’ freedom to form unions. We fight to ensure that “good jobs” is not merely a motto for our past but a rallying cry for our future.

This is who we are and what we stand for: We fight for good jobs.

Declining Job Quality

The challenges are great, however. When we last met in 2001, the nation had emerged from an eight-month recession, but as far as jobs and wages were concerned, the worst was yet to come. Significant job loss persisted for years, particularly in high-wage sectors like manufacturing and information technology. As our statement on Democratizing the Global Economy describes, much of this job loss was the result of our unbalanced trade policies, which have taken a heavy toll in manufacturing, as well as stepped-up offshore outsourcing of white-collar service jobs.

New job creation in the wake of this massive job loss was languid at best and remains uneven. It was not until January of this year that payrolls overall returned to their January 2001 levels, and in the private sector, the jobs deficit continued as of May of this year.

The jobless recovery marked the longest period of sustained job loss and the most unequal distribution of profits and wages during any recovery in at least 50 years. And it marked another turning point as well: a decline in overall job quality.

Study after study has found that the share of America’s jobs with higher pay and better benefits is shrinking, while jobs in industries that are expanding their share of employment pay less and provide inferior

benefits. Since January 2001, U.S. manufacturers have shed 2.8 million jobs, more than in the entire preceding 22 years. On top of those losses, 585,000 information and 140,000 professional and business services jobs—the prized 21st century positions held out only a few years ago as offsets for trade-related manufacturing losses—disappeared between January 2001 and January 2005, after having grown at a healthy pace for the previous four years.

But the problem is not just that we are losing good jobs; it is also that the jobs we are creating are not as good as those we have lost. According to the Economic Policy Institute, between November 2001 and June 2004, average wages were 41 percent less and benefits 52 percent less in expanding industries than in industries that are contracting within the economy. The Labor Department reports that more than half of long-tenured workers who lost their jobs between January 2001 and December 2003 and who found new full-time positions earn less now than before. And it seems we are in for more of the same. A U.S. Conference of Mayors study found that wages in the 10 sectors expected to grow the most through the end of 2005 are lower than wages in the 10 sectors that lost the most jobs between 2001 and 2003. A University of California at Berkeley study estimates as many as 14 million jobs are vulnerable to offshoring. Our nation’s trade deficit continues to register new highs almost every month, manufacturing job loss persists and an estimated 15 to 20 percent of manufacturing jobs may be shipped abroad over the next decade. Seven of the 10 occupations the Labor Department says will grow the most by 2012 require little education and training and pay low wages.

Eroding Health Care

These statistics speak volumes about what is happening to America’s jobs. But workers don’t need the numbers: They live and breathe the fearful decline in job quality every day. And nowhere is that decline more evident than in the area of job-based health care coverage.

Americans have long considered affordable health care coverage a hallmark of good jobs, and most individuals and families with health insurance get

their coverage through employment-based plans. Coupled with strong public programs, which we discuss in our statement on The Values That Unite Us, a vibrant system of job-based coverage moves us ever closer to the goal we have long supported: affordable and high-quality health care for all.

Today, however, we face a health care cost crisis that is moving us further from, not closer to that goal. Spiraling cost hikes are placing needed care out of reach for millions, roiling labor relations and putting downward pressure on wages and other benefits. The crisis is made worse when large and profitable corporations such as Wal-Mart deliberately stint on employees' health coverage, foisting more costs onto workers, other employers and taxpayers. And our ability to resolve the crisis is undermined by a president and an ideologically driven Congress that value huge tax breaks for the wealthiest over affordable health care for all Americans.

Health care costs have registered double-digit increases each year since 2001, while the number of individuals with job-based health coverage has fallen and the ranks of the uninsured have grown. Average health care premiums rose more than 11 percent in 2004, a growth rate five times larger than the increase in workers' wages or the overall rate of inflation for that period.

Workers have been hammered by these increases. More than half of employers surveyed by the Kaiser Family Foundation in 2004 said they had responded to rising health care costs by increasing the amount employees had to pay toward insurance. Between 2001 and 2004, workers' contributions toward premiums for job-based family health care coverage rose 64 percent.

Rising health care costs reduce the number and share of individuals with job-based coverage. Between 2000 and 2003 (the latest available full-year Census data), the number of individuals with job-based health coverage declined a whopping 4.7 million, a drop of 3.9 percentage points. A recent study concludes that over the past five years, each 10 percent increase in health care premium costs has led to the loss of job-based health coverage for

910,000 adults, most of whom became uninsured. Employees of small firms are hit very hard, though in recent years it is the share of the uninsured working in large firms that has grown most.

As workers lose job-based coverage, the overall number of uninsured Americans rises, tempered only by existing safety-net programs. Almost 45 million individuals had no health coverage for all of 2003, an increase of more than 5 million over 2000 levels. The total number of uninsured for all of 2005 is projected to be almost 48 million. Roughly 80 percent of the uninsured are in families with workers who have no access to job-based coverage or who cannot afford to pay their share of employee premiums.

Workers who hold on to job-based coverage are paying more or getting less—or both. In 2003, nearly half of surveyed workers experienced premium or other cost hikes or benefit cuts. One in seven firms in the Kaiser survey said they had cut benefits in 2004 compared with their 2003 offerings.

For union members, rising health care costs occupy center stage in every contract negotiation. Conflicts over health care accounted for almost half of the 6,000 collective-bargaining disputes handled by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation service in 2003, surpassing concerns over wages or job security. Workers in virtually every union and every industry are affected—a six-week Bakery Workers strike against Hershey Foods Corp.; a two-day walk-out by 17,000 electrical workers against General Electric; General Motors' demand for auto workers' givebacks on health care; the Communications Workers of America's 2004 dispute with SBC; UNITE HERE's current battle with hotels in major cities around the nation; contract negotiations by AFSCME and AFT weighed down by debates over spiraling health care costs; and most dramatically, the five-month strike and lock-out that United Food and Commercial Workers members endured in 2004, when Safeway and other Southern California grocers tried to shift sharply higher health care costs to workers.

Rising costs for retiree health coverage present huge problems, not only for the retirees themselves but

also for companies and active employees already struggling under enormous competitive strains. Annual health cost hikes are larger for firms that provide retiree coverage than for those that do not. These increases are accelerating the long-term decline in retiree coverage. Two-thirds of firms (66 percent) provided retiree health benefits in 1988, but only 36 percent of firms did so in 2004. Eight percent of firms ended health benefits for future retirees last year, and another 11 percent are planning to do so this year. Workers who retain eligibility for retiree coverage will be paying substantially more for it: Workers younger than 65 who retired in 2004 contributed 24 percent more toward their retiree health care than those who had retired only one year earlier, in 2003.

Exacerbating the health care cost crisis, some large companies, such as Wal-Mart, that can afford to provide good and affordable health care for their workers deliberately choose not to do so. In the Wal-Mart world of employee health care, workers pay more, wait longer to be covered and face numerous exclusions from coverage. Everyone pays for Wal-Mart's stinginess—the workers themselves, taxpayer-funded public programs such as Medicaid and SCHIP and employers that provide family plans that cover dependents working for Wal-Mart. And employers and employees with good coverage pay higher premiums—\$922 more each year according to a recent study—to offset costs of providing care to the uninsured. And the Wal-Mart model inspires other employers, even firms with good collectively bargained benefits, to push hard to cut benefits, creating a vicious cycle that hurts everyone.

Costs are going up, but serious health care quality problems exist. In fact, quality problems constitute a major cause of high health costs. The lack of timely care leads to chronic health problems; the failure of drug companies to adequately test and report on the relative effectiveness of new, expensive drugs endangers millions of patients a year while adding billions to health spending; the widespread adoption of unproven treatments and ones that are of little value does the same; and the failure of Congress to enact legislation for the reporting and analysis of

medical errors leaves us all at risk of preventable mistakes when we undergo treatment.

A series of reports from the renowned Institute of Medicine documents the dollar cost to payers at \$6 billion to \$8 billion a year and the human cost at up to 100,000 preventable deaths. Reducing the scandalously high level of risk for patients would be a major contribution to the fight against excessive health care costs.

Consolidations, mergers and other changes in the health care industry have produced severe staffing cuts, interfered with the doctor–patient relationship, unreasonably limited choices for both consumers and providers and erected time-consuming and often counterproductive barriers to prescribing and securing necessary care and treatment. Patient care has been compromised, and the nation now faces a critical shortage of nurses and long-term care workers. Frontline health care workers report serious treatment errors and other quality deficiencies that lead to a vicious cycle: Quality deficiencies exacerbate shortages, which affect care negatively. At the same time, consumers and providers alike have limited avenues of recourse against health plans.

America's health care situation is unsustainable. The crisis is imposing huge costs on workers and their employers and bankrupting many working families. By failing to act, we are digging a hole economically and morally that threatens the fiber of our nation. We must act now, and the union movement must lead. We cannot deliver on the promise of good jobs for America's working families unless we fix our broken health care system.

Today, we reaffirm our commitment to the principle of universal health care. In a nation as rich and diverse as ours, health care is a moral right and an economic imperative. We cannot—and will not—waver in our determination to win high-quality health care that is affordable and accessible to all workers and their families.

Because on-the-job coverage is the best vehicle we currently have to provide the most Americans with

affordable and good care, we will work to strengthen employer-based plans and to secure reforms to relieve the cost pressures on those plans, through such measures as a federal reinsurance program for catastrophic claims. Through collective bargaining and public policy activities we will continue to pursue reforms to contain out-of-control health care costs without sacrificing either access or quality. We will encourage and support our affiliates as they bargain health care benefits for their members and join them in actions designed to raise public awareness and hold the line on cost hikes and benefit cuts. And we will step up pressure on the companies where our members work, recruiting them to join us in our fight for universal health care.

We will support and lead campaigns for legislative and innovative strategies at the federal and state levels to expand coverage for workers and reduce costs for employers that provide good care for their workers.

We will also campaign actively for state and federal disclosure laws that will provide valuable information about which large and profitable employers are pushing health care costs onto taxpayers in order to fatten their bottom-line profits. We believe all Americans should have access to quality, affordable care and employers able to provide good coverage should pay their fair share.

We will continue to oppose moves to replace traditional employer-sponsored plans with defined-contribution and high-deductible health plans that save money for employers but shift greater risks and costs to employees.

And we will push Congress to deliver on the promise of affordable health care for workers who lose their jobs because of trade deals.

We will also work for real improvements in the quality of health care. We support public and private partnerships that include strong consumer representation to address health care quality and patient safety issues. We also support policies and practices that foster new technologies, such as computerized drug order entry systems, to help reduce medical

errors and risks to patients. All levels of government, as well as health care facilities and providers, must take real steps—both in terms of technology and staffing—to improve health care quality, help reduce medical errors and the high cost associated with them and increase patient safety; we will push them to do so. We support staffing ratios and the prohibition of mandatory overtime for nurses, as well as the inclusion of frontline health care workers in decision making.

We support efforts to require large businesses to spend at least as much on health care as other large employers in their state that fund comprehensive benefits for their workers and families or contribute an equal amount to state-administered health insurance programs.

We are committed to helping ensure health insurance coverage for retirees and early retirees, including Medicare, is affordable and of good quality and that it does not impose disproportionate costs on employers and their active employees. To that end, we will support policies designed to mitigate the extraordinary costs that arise in industries with disproportionate shares of retirees. In addition, as we describe in our statement on The Values That Unite Us, we will fight for a better prescription drug benefit and other improvements under Medicare to meet the health care needs of our nation's seniors.

Insecure Retirement

We will not turn around America's jobs crisis unless we solve the deepening crisis of retirement insecurity for America's working families. As we describe in our statement on The Values That Unite Us, one step in solving our retirement crisis is to strengthen and improve our public program, Social Security, not to tear it down through costly privatization schemes that would hurt America's working families. And for thousands of workers, our nation's railroad retirement system provides critical pension, disability, unemployment and survivor benefits that must be protected and not cut or eliminated, as some have suggested for certain segments of the industry.

Beyond strengthening and protecting Social Security, we must act to restore and strengthen workers'

job-based pensions and take steps to protect and improve workers' retirement savings. Along with Social Security, a strong and vibrant defined-benefit pension system, coupled with sound and safe opportunities for investing and saving, is indispensable to building real retirement security for working families. Over the past quarter century, however, the private pension system has faced steady erosion, and today significant plan underfunding, pension terminations, inadequate funding rules and the state of the pension insurance program pose serious challenges to the system's future and the retirement security of the 34 million families that participate in it.

Hardest hit lately are airline industry employees and retirees; United's \$10 billion pension default, affecting more than 120,000 active and retired workers, is the largest in history. It follows on the heels of a \$5 billion default by US Airways for its employee funds, and other carriers threaten to be next. Before airlines, it was steel industry employees and retirees getting hammered, after a wave of steel company bankruptcies led to the default on billions in unfunded pension liabilities. While workers in the steel and airline industries have been hit hard because of failed trade policies and failed transportation policies coupled with the aftermath of Sept. 11, 2001, increased security costs and historically high fuel prices, workers in no industry are immune. In the past four years, more than 500 companies have defaulted on pension obligations totaling more than \$13 billion. Meanwhile, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp. itself, which ended 2001 with an \$8 billion surplus in its single employer insurance program, now is running a \$23 billion deficit.

The funding problems are exacerbating a long-term trend away from secure, defined-benefit pensions to riskier 401(k)-style defined-contribution plans funded primarily, if not exclusively, through worker contributions. In 1978, private-sector employers maintained 128,041 defined-benefit plans, covering 41 percent of private-sector workers. Today, only 26,000 plans remain, covering just 21 percent of private employees. Employers also continue to convert their traditional defined-benefit pension plans to so-called cash-balance plans, often in ways that pose significant risks to older, long-service employees.

Public-sector guaranteed pensions are also under attack, in part because of the role some plans have played in pushing for corporate accountability. Privatizing these funds is a top priority for hard-right ideologues like Grover Norquist and like-minded organizations, such as the American Legislative Exchange Council, which is actively marketing privatization proposals in the states. California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger only recently backed off a plan to privatize the state's large and well-funded public fund, CalPERS, after police, firefighters, teachers and other public employees took to the streets in protest, but he continues to push for privatization and is threatening to campaign for a ballot initiative to do just that. Now, as many as 12 other states are considering changes to defined-benefit funds.

At the same time workers face ever-widening threats to guaranteed pensions, their ability to set aside retirement savings is compromised by stagnant wages and inadequate safeguards for investments. Half of all households headed by workers between the ages of 55 and 59 years old have less than \$10,000 in tax-preferred retirement savings accounts. Among individuals eligible to participate in 401(k) plans, roughly one-quarter (26 percent) do not, often because they cannot afford to do so. Less than half of workers with earnings below \$20,000 participate in 401(k) plans, compared with 90 percent of those who earn more than \$80,000.

Plans such as 401(k) accounts shift investment risks and burdens from employers to individual workers. This risk-shifting is especially problematic when, as often happens, companies stuff workers' retirement accounts with employer stock, spelling disaster for workers when companies cook the books, falsify records and otherwise gamble with their employees' retirement accounts. Enron and WorldCom workers and retirees lost more than \$2 billion in retirement savings when their companies went belly-up after engaging in massive accounting fraud. Yet the president and Congress have taken virtually no steps to enhance safeguards for workers' retirement savings.

We must address America's retirement insecurity crisis: Workers need more, not less, retirement

income security. We reaffirm our historic commitment to and intention to lobby and bargain for guaranteed pensions that cover all workers, promote portability, provide adequate retirement income and protect workers' pension assets against corporate malfeasance.

For single-employer pension plans, we will fight shortsighted attempts to fix the current pension funding shortfall with drastic changes that penalize workers by prohibiting certain types of benefits altogether, automatically placing severe restrictions on benefit increases and accruals and cutting federal insurance guarantees. We also will oppose changes that impose prohibitive and unnecessary costs on employers, encouraging them to abandon defined-benefit plans. We will push for changes to plan funding rules, to require plan sponsors to make larger contributions when they are financially able to do so, giving plans greater capacity to weather market fluctuations and cyclical crises. For multi-employer pension plans, which are run jointly by union- and company-appointed trustees, we will push for reforms that give plan trustees and the relevant bargaining parties additional tools to protect their pension plans. Current rules do not provide the flexibility needed to protect pension plans until it is too late. In the public sector, we will fight strenuously against efforts to privatize retirement.

The guaranteed pension system should also be expanded to cover more working families. Monthly pension checks are the largest source of income for millions of Americans. But pension benefits are not shared evenly. More than 45 million workers are not covered by retirement plans at work, and only a little more than one-fourth of older Americans receive pensions. Benefits go disproportionately to upper-income workers; women and people of color most frequently are excluded from pension coverage. We must explore strategies and implement policies that will make pensions available to more Americans.

To improve pensions generally, we support provisions to protect the purchasing power of retirees, and we affirm our commitment to defending and advancing one of the longest-standing retirement security programs, the railroad retirement system.

Finally, while continuing to resist the ongoing conversion of defined-benefit plans to defined-contribution plans, we will lobby and bargain for greater protections for workers' savings in 401(k) plans and similar tax-preferred accounts. Workers must have real choices about their investments, unbiased and timely information they need to make informed decisions and representation on the boards and bodies that administer these savings plans.

Freedom to Form Unions

The erosion of health care and retirement security is a reflection of declining job quality, but it is also a consequence of the ruthless, relentless assault on the freedom of workers to form and join unions. In workplaces where employers respect their workers' organizing and bargaining rights, industrial relations are smoother, workers are more productive and jobs are better. Substitute employer hostility and opposition for respect, however, and the quality of jobs plummets.

More than 50 million nonunion workers want unions at their workplaces, but workers attempting to form them face a 97-percent chance of encountering opposition and hostility from employers and union-busting consultants. Coercion and intimidation—much of it technically legal—and discipline and discharge are standard fare in anti-union campaigns. Penalties for breaking the law are so ineffective and enforcement so anemic that employers have little incentive to respect workers' rights. Appeals and procedural delays allow employers to drag out the recognition process for years. And even when workers finally overcome these obstacles, employers continue to resist at the bargaining table. As a result, workers are unable to achieve an initial bargaining agreement in almost half of all first-contract negotiations, even after winning hard-fought, protracted elections.

The failure and refusal to respect and enforce workers' freedom to form unions and bargain collectively hurts all workers, whether in unions or not. Unions raise wages almost as much for nonmembers as for members; thus, interference with the freedom

to organize and bargain suppresses wages for all workers. Pervasive denial of the freedom to form unions is a major culprit in the huge and widening gap between worker productivity and wages and in the alarming expansion of income inequality. Suppressing the freedom to form unions also exacerbates our health care and retirement crises: Nonunion workers are six times more likely than union members to lack health insurance and only one-fourth as likely to have guaranteed pensions. These negative effects on workers spill over to their families and communities, weakening the middle class and making it tougher for us to deal with seemingly intractable problems such as poverty.

Restoring workers' freedom to organize and bargain is the most important ingredient in building good jobs for America's workers. To change the climate and the rules governing organizing, we have launched an aggressive campaign to pass the Employee Free Choice Act. This measure amends the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) to substitute democratic majority sign-up procedures for the current National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election process, provide stronger and timelier penalties for employer malfeasance and authorize first-contract mediation and, as necessary, binding arbitration. At the same time, we will continue to advocate expanded protections under state law for workers not covered by the NLRA, as well as appropriate state and local measures to help stem employer interference with workers attempting to exercise their organizing and bargaining rights.

For too many years, public employees—from teachers and paraprofessionals to firefighters and law enforcement officers, from office workers to laborers and other classes of government workers—have been denied employment benefits guaranteed private-sector workers since the New Deal. The disparate treatment must end. The AFL-CIO renews its commitment and will continue the fight at every level of government to ensure all state and local government employees are afforded the right to form and join unions, bargain collectively with their respective public employees and enjoy full citizenship and political rights.

We are determined to restore the freedom of America's workers to form unions and bargain collectively. Our federation is committed to growing our movement by restoring workplace justice and creating a climate in which all employees have the opportunity to join a union.

Fair Wages and Fair Treatment on the Job

We believe in honest, hard work. In return, workers deserve fair wages and fair treatment on the job. This bargain has become increasingly attenuated in recent years, as workers are losing ever more ground economically and new threats to basic workplace rights emerge.

Workers are not reaping the benefits of their rising productivity. Since the fall of 2001, worker productivity has grown 4.1 percent each year, but annual compensation has risen only 1.5 percent. In real terms, workers' wages are lower today than they were three years ago. Slow wage growth is one reason household incomes have fallen each year since 2000. The middle class is squeezed as inflation outpaces wage growth, and low-wage workers are becoming increasingly desperate. The federal minimum wage has not budged from \$5.15 an hour since 1997, an hourly rate that on a full-time, full-year basis falls more than \$5,000 below the poverty level for a family of three.

Lousy wages are not the result of the recent recession and jobless recovery: They reflect the continued devaluing of jobs and distorted corporate and governmental priorities that value boosting corporate profits and CEO compensation over improving workers' living standards. During the past seven business cycles, 77 percent of corporate income growth went into compensation for workers; only 23 percent went toward corporate profits. But in this business cycle, the pattern is reversed: Corporate profits have swallowed nearly 70 percent of corporate income growth, while compensation for workers accounts for only 30 percent. Corporate profits shot up 16 percent last year, and compensation for the average CEO of a major corporation rose

12 percent, to \$9.4 million. Workers' wages, however, grew only 2.2 percent.

The union movement will fight to raise workers' wages and protect our nation's basic wage standard laws. We will continue our campaign to raise the federal minimum wage and resist any efforts to roll back this fundamental guarantee or to trade off other workplace rights as the price for a modest minimum wage increase. At the state and local levels, we will work to enact new minimum wage and living wage measures, like the successful 2004 minimum wage campaigns in Florida and Nevada and the hundreds of living wage initiatives cities and municipalities have passed, including 10 in Washtenaw County, Mich., just in the past six years. We will fight all efforts to repeal or reduce prevailing wage protections at the federal, state or local level and will work instead to boost protections under these laws.

At the same time we struggle to raise workers' wages, we are fighting to stem the greatest sustained assault on workers' basic workplace protections in decades. The Bush administration has stripped away collective bargaining and civil service protections from more than 800,000 federal employees and, through new rules governing competitive bidding, has placed the jobs of roughly 850,000 federal employees at risk. Last year, over the objections of millions of Americans and against the will of Congress, the Bush Labor Department implemented new overtime rules that represent the largest rollback in overtime protections in the history of the Fair Labor Standards Act. The president is pushing for new laws allowing employers to substitute comp time for overtime pay. The Bush NLRB has issued a string of decisions curtailing workers' rights to join unions, to participate in collective action and to receive just remedies for unfair labor practices. Similarly, the Bush National Mediation Board, which oversees labor relations in the aviation and rail industries, has frustrated organizing campaigns, attacked basic workers' rights and impeded fair and timely resolution of collective bargaining disputes. And the administration has interfered in airline and long-shore workers' collective bargaining, tipping the scales in management's favor.

The administration's assaults on workers' basic rights have reduced the quality of jobs in America and added immeasurably to the greater insecurity America's workers face in today's economy. In the face of these attacks, we reaffirm our commitment to preserving bedrock labor protections for America's workers. We will continue our fight to restore overtime protections for America's workers, by rolling back provisions of the new overtime rule that undercut these protections and advocating new federal and state laws and regulations to protect and strengthen overtime rights. We will continue to push for reforms of wage and hour laws at the federal and state levels to extend full protections to workers in nontraditional employment relationships; changing employment arrangements do not justify stripping workers of basic workplace rights. We will be vigilant in our efforts to ensure full and enforceable labor rights protections for the nation's most vulnerable workers, including immigrants, low-wage workers and people of color. We are committed to preserving and protecting Sector 13(c) transit worker job protections and collective bargaining rights and we will fight any efforts to pervert the Railway Labor Act to weaken aviation and rail workers' position in collective bargaining, including the imposition of baseball-style arbitration on these workers.

Maintaining good jobs also requires us to renew our nation's commitment to nondiscrimination, equal opportunity and affirmative action in America's workplaces. Our nation's civil rights laws are 40 years old, yet today, women and people of color still encounter workplace bias limiting job opportunities, still earn less than similarly situated white men and are still too often relegated to second-class workplace status. Even now, when discrimination ought to be a relic of the past, recent news accounts remind us of its persistence. Wal-Mart faces the largest class-action sex discrimination suit in America's history. A June 2005 study finds white men with prison records far more likely to get jobs than similarly situated African American men. And New York Attorney General Elliott Spitzer has just announced a settlement with numerous employment agencies that routinely made race-based job referrals. Meanwhile, because Congress and the president have not passed

legislation banning workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people receive only piecemeal justice under the law. It remains legal in 34 states to discriminate in employment based on sexual orientation and in 44 states to discriminate against transgender people.

We believe this is wrong: Workplace discrimination has no place in American society, and we reaffirm our determination to end it. We will continue to fight for new laws, as needed, to protect the rights of all Americans to be free from workplace discrimination. And we will work with our members and our allies to secure vigorous enforcement of existing protections and new legislation.

Safe, Secure and Healthy Workplaces

Good jobs are safe, secure and healthy jobs. Much of the history of workplace safety and health in the United States has been marked by catastrophe and struggle. Tragedies such as the Triangle Waist Factory fire in 1911 that killed 146 workers, the Gauley Bridge Tunnel silica poisoning disaster that killed hundreds and the Farmington mining disaster that killed 78 coal miners focused public attention on the dangers in America's workplaces. And, of course, the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, reminded all of us that we must secure our nation from the acts and consequences of terrorism. But it was the labor movement that turned outrage into action and led the fight to improve working conditions. For more than a century, through organizing, bargaining, strikes, state and national legislation and regulations, education and political mobilization the labor movement has fought to protect workers from workplace injuries, illnesses and deaths. The labor movement must continue the fight for health and safety. This fight can strengthen our overall efforts to organize and mobilize for good jobs.

Our decades-long efforts have improved working conditions, made jobs safer and healthier and strengthened workers' rights. Job fatalities and injuries have fallen significantly, as have exposures

to workplace hazards, including asbestos, lead and cancer-causing chemicals. Workers and unions have won greatly expanded legal rights to get information on hazards and to take action to get them controlled. Our knowledge must be applied, ranging from methods to prevent traumatic injuries in construction and transportation, ergonomic injuries which afflict every sector, infectious disease spreading through health care workplaces and chemical exposures in manufacturing, construction and mining.

Extreme political and corporate opposition make the fight for safe jobs and stronger rights for workers an even greater struggle. Hard-won gains are now threatened. The Bush administration has refused to set any new standards to protect workers from serious hazards. In Congress, conservative lawmakers continue their efforts to roll back existing protections and rights. At the workplace, employers cut their own efforts in safety and press to shift responsibility for safety and health onto workers through behavioral safety and injury discipline programs instead of reducing exposure to workplace hazards.

For many groups of workers, workplace conditions remain particularly dangerous. Fatalities and injuries among immigrant workers and Hispanic workers are much greater than for other groups of workers, due to their concentration in high-risk industries, vulnerability because of immigration status and lack of union representation. Workers across all sectors of the economy face increased risks due to downsizing, short staffing, increased work demands and excessive work hours. Globalization has created additional pressures, with employers looking to cut costs, reduce wages and benefits and threatening to move jobs offshore.

After the horrific events of Sept. 11, 2001, a great deal of attention and rhetoric has been focused on protecting the homeland, especially our transportation system, from another attack. Yet we find the rhetoric from government often has not matched up with reality. While improvements to our aviation system have been made, loopholes have remained and other key parts of the transportation system have been virtually ignored. Mandatory security training for workers remains almost nonexistent,

sufficient resources have not been allocated to harden vulnerable targets and too often workers are not enlisted as true partners in the war against terror. First responders are not receiving the support they need, and the unique problems created by the storage, use and transport of hazardous materials have not been addressed.

Addressing these serious problems facing workers requires a vital and strong labor movement. At the same time, our movement can only grow and become stronger if unions are addressing the fundamental concerns and needs of workers. The union movement's work to ensure safe, secure and healthy jobs must be linked to core activities of organizing and political mobilization.

Our movement has made Workers Memorial Day a worldwide recognition of the toll of occupational injury and illness. We must increase grassroots activity and hold elected officials accountable for their actions on worker safety and health. Workplace safety and health must be advanced as part of the foundation of homeland security.

Our defense of existing protections and our push for action on major problems such as ergonomics, job stress, work hours, behavioral safety, chemical exposures, infectious diseases and employer payment for personal protective equipment must continue. The labor movement must be the voice of workers on these issues in the halls of Congress, in the corridors of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Mine Safety and Health Administration and in state legislatures. We will seek to strengthen the Occupational Safety and Health Act to expand coverage to all workers, improve whistleblower protections and enhance criminal penalties for willful violations. We will build these efforts on education and organizing at the grassroots level and tie them to other legislative and political activities as we work to increase the political voice of workers.

We will also address the safety and health concerns of workers through union organizing. For most workers, the right to a safe job can only be realized through collective action and a union contract.

At the same time, action on safety and health builds stronger, active local unions. We will work to develop effective strategies to incorporate safety and health into organizing campaigns and to support the training of organizers to identify and address workers' safety and health concerns as part of union organizing efforts.

Through our collective efforts, we will continue the fight for safe jobs, as we build a stronger labor movement to improve workers' lives.

Meeting the Dual Demands of Work and Family

As jobs deteriorate, workers must work longer and harder to make ends meet and keep their families afloat. In 78 percent of today's two-parent households, both parents are in the paid labor force, together averaging 90 hours of work each week. Three-quarters of women on their own with children younger than 18 are working for pay. Nearly half (45 percent) of workers with families report significant interference between their jobs and their family lives, a sharp increase from the share reporting such difficulties 25 years ago.

Workers need good jobs that provide flexibility and support, enabling them to get their work done and to care for their families. But our employers and our public policies fall short when it comes to helping workers strike the right family and work balance. The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993, which provides a right to unpaid leave for certain employees, has benefited more than 50 million workers since its passage. However, because the law applies only to workplaces with 50 or more employees and has other limits on coverage, roughly 40 percent of the nation's workforce falls outside its protections. And because it provides only unpaid leave, millions of workers who need time off to care for family members cannot afford to take it.

Workers should never have to sacrifice their jobs to provide needed care for their families. The United States is the only industrialized nation that fails to provide paid family leave benefits with a guaranteed

right to return to work, an intolerable inconsistency for a nation that preaches “family values” and professes to value families. The union movement is committed to winning the changes workers need to care for their families and do their jobs. Working with our allies, we are fighting at the federal and state levels to win greater family leave protections; and at the federal level, we will resist efforts by the Bush administration to cut back on existing FMLA rights. With the leadership of the California labor movement, in 2004 California became the first state in the nation to enact comprehensive paid leave legislation. State federations of labor are leading similar fights in a number of states. At the national level, we are pushing to pass legislation providing guaranteed paid sick leave for America’s workers. And, as we did in response to the Bush overtime rules in 2004, we will mobilize and fight any changes in FMLA regulations that roll back the law’s vital protections.

We will also support and bargain for policies that give workers opportunities for alternative work schedules or alternative employment relationships, better enabling them to balance their work lives and their personal lives. We recognize, however, that our public policies often fail to protect the basic workplace rights of individuals in such arrangements, and that some employers and politicians cynically use workers’ legitimate desire for greater flexibility to justify dilution of overtime pay and other protections. Workers deserve good jobs that provide genuine flexibility without denying their basic rights. We will fight for those jobs and oppose any attempts to weaken worker protections under the guise of extending greater workplace flexibility.

Supporting Workers Through Education and Training and a Strong Unemployment Compensation System

Education and training programs that provide workers with meaningful advancement opportunities and a strong unemployment compensation system that provides critical income support and job search assistance during periods of job loss are

essential complements to good jobs. Our efforts on both fronts, however, run up against ongoing attempts by the Bush administration to cut funds, end successful programs, dilute the federal role in workforce development and unemployment insurance, privatize public services, eliminate merit staffing and replace guaranteed income support and job services for unemployed workers with limited private accounts.

Since 2001, the Bush administration has proposed to cut almost \$2 billion (inflation-adjusted) in job training funds. The president is seeking to eliminate the U.S. Employment Service (ES), which serves millions of jobless workers each year, and to privatize the critical ES function of linking workers looking for jobs with employers looking for workers. He wants to block grant multiple federal job training programs, diluting the capacity to provide tailored support and services for groups of workers facing unique labor market challenges. And in place of guaranteed unemployment compensation and job search assistance, he proposes to give jobless workers limited private accounts that, for many, will translate into far less assistance than they need or to which they are currently entitled.

The changes the administration seeks will hurt rather than help workers, particularly those who most need access to a well-funded, nonbiased, public system staffed by career merit employees, as they look for jobs or seek to improve their skills. We will continue to fight these wrong-headed approaches. The union movement has long been a major force in workplace education and training programs that foster skills development designed to meet the needs of workers and employers alike. We have developed and implemented many models of successful high-road partnerships that enabled employers to meet their needs for highly skilled employees and enhance their competitiveness, while materially improving the lives and career options for workers. We will continue to lobby and bargain for such programs and work to make them more widely available. We will also fight to maintain job search assistance services that are universally available, publicly administered and well-funded, instead of replacing them with a patchwork quilt of

privatized programs that will fail many American workers.

We will also continue to push for state and federal reforms to our nation's unemployment system. This system plays an essential role in providing income support to jobless workers and stabilizing the economy during downturns. But only one-third of unemployed workers receive unemployment insurance benefits, and these benefits replace only one-third of their lost wages. Many particularly vulnerable workers, especially those in nonstandard work arrangements and those earning very low wages, fall outside the system altogether. And states continue to cut employer payroll taxes, threatening to diminish even further the capacity of this important social insurance program to meet workers' needs.

A strong and widely available unemployment compensation system that workers can fall back on in times of need is an important complement to the good jobs we are determined to build. We will fight for federal and state reforms providing broader

access to benefits, better wage-replacement rates and benefits of sufficient duration to enable workers to meet their income needs and find the best possible employment.

Our movement and the workers who look to us to fight for them face many challenges in the years ahead. Not least of these is the challenge to build and sustain good jobs in America. It is a challenge requiring us to restore health care, retirement and economic security, protect workers' freedom to form unions, prevent erosion of important workplace rights and protections, help workers balance work and family demands and provide them with meaningful education and training opportunities and a sound system of unemployment compensation to fall back on in need. It is a tall order, but one we are determined to meet. We have dedicated "ourselves to improving the lives of working families, bringing fairness and dignity to the workplace and securing social equity in the Nation." To keep that sacred promise, we must win good jobs for America's workers.