



Political & Legislative

Issue 2

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Above: General President Hite with President Barack

Multi-Employer Pension Fund Relief

The 2008 financial crisis has taken a serious toll on our nation's multi-employer pension funds. Without the proper relief, the funding status of pension plans could put a full economic recovery at risk as well as jeopardize benefits which have become critical to so many UA members. The losses suffered are deeper and span a wider network of plans than those which led to the Pension Protection Act (PPA) in 2006. Because of the newer

funding timetables enforced by the PPA system, it has become harder to assist those financially challenged funds compared to previous years.

The UA Political and Legislative Department is working with the National Coordinating Committee for Multi-Employer Plan (NCCMP) to push for relief. In December, NCCMP member organizations came close to securing a 90-day extension on all 4th quarter plans in the Defense Act spending bill; unfortunately, due to an unforeseen last hour change, the only non-defense provision included in the

Legislation Pursued by UA Political and Legislative Department:

Health Care Reform
Pension Reform
Immigration Reform
Clean Water & Safe Drinking
Water Reauthorizations
Nuclear Power Growth
Clean Coal Technology
Green Jobs included in Energy
Davis-Bacon Mandate
PLA Growth
Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act
Stronger Building Codes
Native American Outreach
Veterans in Piping Program
Misclassification

legislation was an extension of COBRA benefits. With a massive comprehensive spending bill and health care on the Congressional legislative calendar, time simply ran out for pension relief in 2009.

Presently, there are multiple proposals on the table, including a legislative draft by Senator Casey and by the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. The Department has been partnering with NCCMP to enact a 10 year smoothing recovery with a 30 year amortization. We will continue working to ensure the best possible outcome for all of our retirees and working families.

Have You Registered for the UA Legislative and Political Task Force?
Please Visit www.ua.org to Register

It's Simple. The Economy Needs J-O-B-S

For the UA, jobs have always been our top priority. Now, with health care in its final stages, the White House and Washington leaders are, at last, focusing their full attention on employment. With guidance from the White House, both the House and Senate plan to take immediate legislative action to try to jumpstart greater job creation. Among the most popular proposals for funding this legislation, and one favored by the White House, is to use some of the \$200 billion left over from last year's federal bank bailout.

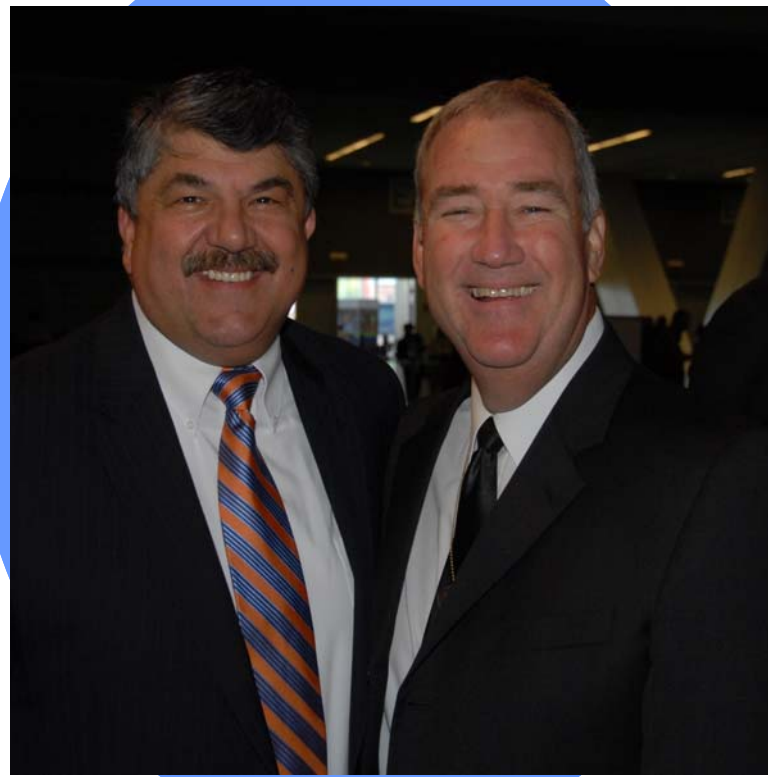
Over the past month, the United Association has been meeting with key congressional allies to push for more jobs for our members. A top priority of the UA is to pass a massive water infrastructure bill. We believe investing in our nation's critical water infrastructure is one of the most effective ways the government can create quality jobs. According to the Water Infrastructure Network, leading economists have estimated that some 20,000 to 26,000 construction, engineering and manufacturing jobs are created for every billion dollars authorized for water infrastructure.

The best driving force aimed at this goal is *The Water Protection and Reinvestment Act*, H.R. 3202. The bill, which provides specific employment opportunities, was introduced by Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) in the House and has garnered bipartisan support. Rep. Blumenauer's bill would establish a Water Infrastructure Trust Fund (WITF) with a separate, dedicated annual funding stream (like the national highway fund) of \$10 billion to help states replace, repair and maintain water infrastructure. Comparatively, the Senate's *Water Infrastructure Financing Act*, S. 1005, which was introduced by Sen. Benjamin Cardin (D-MD) and also enjoys bipartisan support, would not create a dedicated trust fund. However, the bill would still provide \$39 billion over 5 years, or \$7.8 billion per year, for water infrastructure projects.

In addition to investments in water infrastructure, the UA also views the climate legislation currently being considered in both Houses of Congress as an opportunity to increase employment opportunities for our members. We believe any bill must not only create new green jobs, but protect existing jobs as well. It has become critical to include language designed to make traditional power sources work by providing incentives and funding for industrial and urban retrofit projects. We are working to incorporate the application of cutting-edge carbon capture sequestration as well as coal gasification technologies; it is also important that an adequate number of allowances be granted to plants and refineries in the final bill. These measures will not only help avoid job losses, but assist the ultimate objective of transitioning to cleaner technologies.

A strong commitment towards nuclear energy is also essential. The UA is encouraged to see Senate leaders like John Kerry (D-MA) and Lindsay Graham (R-SC) make the case for a streamlined permitting process for plant construction and the provision of loan guarantees in the Senate bill. We believe any legislation passed should have a Nuclear Title that contains these vital elements. Furthermore, the UA Political and Legislative Affairs Department is working hard to integrate provisions requiring the Department of Energy to expedite loan guarantees processing; such steps include, pledging fairness and reasonable interest rates so that nuclear construction projects can get underway and in a timely manner.

A final promising employment-related legislative opportunity the UA continues to lobby for is the Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act, H.R. 1194. This measure will not only create immediate jobs, but protect property and most importantly, save lives.



Above: AFL-CIO President Trumka and General President Hite

Health Care Reform

The recent Massachusetts Senatorial special election has not only made an impacting political statement to the nation, but has greatly affected current and future Congressional legislation—specifically health care. The bill's status as of January 22nd is being reviewed by all parties to see how best to proceed. The political and legislative department will continue to monitor and report events as they unfold.

The UA, with your help, continues to lobby Congressional leadership on all key issues, including the **Merkley Amendment, which requires construction employers to be covered by the law and contribute to insurance costs if they employ at least 5 workers; non-construction employers are exempt if they employ less than 50 workers.** Having helped design and successfully lobby this Amendment, the UA was proud to see it included in the final Senate bill; this provision holds contractors accountable and helps level the playing field. We believe health care is a right, not a privilege, especially in such a high-risk industry as construction.

A detailed report on health care will be provided when the legislation is finalized, likely later this month. Please go to our website <http://>

UA Political Spotlight Ohio Governor Ted Strickland (D)



- Took office January 8, 2007
- As a Congressman, Ted consistently supported collective bargaining rights and was a co-sponsor of the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act of 2005.
- Ted also co-sponsored the Employee Free Choice Act, allowing workers to research and join unions.

Unemployment Benefits

In November 2009, Congress approved legislation that provides *14 weeks of additional* federally-financed unemployment benefits for workers who have exhausted their 26 weeks of benefits provided by their respective states. Workers in states with unemployment greater than 8.5% can be eligible for *20 additional weeks* of unemployment. Congress also extended the deadline for unemployed workers to apply for these additional benefits from their state workforce agencies to February 28, 2010.

Right: General Secretary Treasurer, Pat Perno and Safety and Health National Coordinator, Laurie Shadrick

New Federal PLA Policy: Status Report

One of the many benefits of having a President who understands our industry and respects politically active labor groups, like the UA, is the establishment of a new Federal Project Labor Agreement (PLA) Policy. The initial framework for this policy was created through Executive Order 13502, which encourages the use of PLAs by federal government agencies. In addition to authoring the new policy, President Obama also took the next critical step by signaling a commitment to use PLAs on an initial set of projects.

The use of PLAs in the private sector and on state and local government projects is not unusual. However, PLA operation by the federal government has only been introduced to part of the administration, specifically the Department of Energy's, DOE, nuclear projects. President Obama, more than any of his predecessors, has acted to bring the benefits of PLAs to the broader national stage.

In spite of these positive developments, implementation of the new Federal PLA Policy has been slow-moving; a reality that can be attributed to several causes. First, most federal agencies lack experience using PLAs and, therefore, don't have appropriate procedures in place to design or administer these agreements. Second, the non-union sector, led by ABC, has demonstrated a willingness to raise legal challenges to federal PLAs and has indicated it will fight this policy at every turn. This necessitates extra precaution in the planning stages because the first projects will surely be subject to major litigation. Third, federal PLAs must overcome a measure of typical bureaucratic resistance acute in the federal sector due to federal agencies' inexperience with these agreements.

The UA's Political and Legislative Affairs Department is privileged to be working closely with the administration to address these challenges and we're hopeful that the first PLA projects will be underway in the next few months. Some of the Department's work on this front is memorialized in a PLA "*Briefing Book*" which is by far the most comprehensive compilation of supporting information and data for PLAs in the industry. This document was sent to the White House and all federal contracting agencies, in addition to being distributed to all UA Local Unions in October of last year.

Documenting over \$125 billion worth of PLA construction across the country, this Briefing Book is being used to educate federal officials about the widespread and successful use of PLAs in the private sector as well as by state and local governments. It also includes references to every pro-PLA study, gives examples of PLA legislative action and offers other supporting information. The PLA Briefing Book, which is available on our website, was also designed for more general use to assist UA Locals in future lobbying efforts in state and local governments on any newly proposed PLAs.

In addition to this activity, our Department is working with the UA Construction Department and the UA legal counsel, which recently became part of a small PLA task force. We are all working closely with the Administration and Building Trades Department to develop critical selection, approval and implementation procedures that will provide the key components of the federal PLA policy. We will provide updates on this policy in future newsletters.



In the Works: Comprehensive Immigration Reform

In December, General President Hite was invited as one of very few representatives in labor to attend a National Jobs Summit at the White House with President Obama and other leading officials from industry. During this Summit, President Hite pressed for various types of Congressional action to create new jobs, including new funding for water infrastructure projects and legislation to facilitate faster development of nuclear energy projects. In addition, the General President pressed for comprehensive reform of our nation's immigration laws because, as UA reports from around the country show, many construction industry employers continue to abuse these laws by importing foreign nationals to perform work that can and should be performed by American workers. Such job-killing tactics should not be tolerated at any time and are particularly offensive in a tough economy.

The General President's message is well timed. While healthcare reform and climate change legislation have been garnering most of the interest by the mass media, immigration reform is also starting to push towards the forefront. No timeline exists for a completed bill, but on December 15, 2009, Representative Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) introduced language that will serve as a starting point for negotiation in the House of Representatives.

Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY) is taking the lead in the Senate. Schumer expects to provide a rough outline of his proposal this month while looking at February or March for official bill introduction. We can expect the final reform package to address border and interior enforcement as well as employment verification. The House version will feature agreed upon language between Congress and organized labor, which will seek to reform the guest worker visa program. Notably, there will also be no expansion of current guest worker programs.

In addition, a new biometric employment verification pilot program will be sought in order to improve the reliability of identification documents used in the system and prevent visa abuse. While less is known about the Senate version, we do know that Senator Schumer is working with Republican and Democratic Senators alike to negotiate a final bill. There is no doubt that immigration reform is needed. With General President Hite making this a top priority for the United Association, the Political and Legislative Affairs Department will continue to work with other Departments of the UA to push forward and make sure American jobs go to American citizens.

Below (L-R): BA Paul Campbell UA 537, Assistant General President Steve Kelly, BA Tm Fandel UA 12 and BA Harry Brett UA 12



Below (L-R): UA Political and Legislative Director, Rick Terven, IL Senate Candidate Alexi Giannoulia and White House Assistant Political Director Nate Tamarin



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