



Drive Up Standards

NEWSLETTER

Connecting School Bus Workers From Coast to Coast

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School Bus Workers SPEAK UP

The 2012 Teamsters School Bus Workers Congress was the perfect venue for school bus drivers to tell their stories and update the audience on what is happening at their bus yards across the country.

The speakers included school bus drivers from a number of companies, including First Student, Durham, STA, Latino Express, Cook-Illinois, Illinois Central and Baumann Bus.

“If it wasn’t for the union, I don’t know what we would have done,” said Martha Swiatkowski, a driver with Baumann Bus on Long Island and a member of Local 1205. “You have to really stand strong, and show the company that you’re not going to let them push you over or mow you down. Those days are over.”

Dala Watson told the crowd how she and her coworkers stood united and joined Local 179 at Illinois Central in Wilmington, Ill.

“On May 3, 2012, we voted to become Teamsters by an astounding 31 to 7 vote. What a feeling of redemption, knowing we had a voice now,” Watson said. “The ability stand up to the company and tell them we were not happy with the way we were treated was an awesome feeling.”

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2012 TEAMSTERS SCHOOL BUS Workers Congress Makes History

Hundreds of Teamsters Participate in National Event



School bus workers from around the country recently met in Chicago for the 2012 Teamsters School Bus Workers Congress. More than 200 school bus drivers, monitors and Teamster local union representatives gathered at this hugely successful and historic two-day event.

“While we have a lot more work to do, we’ve built a movement of school bus workers across North America who are gaining the respect, dignity and working conditions that they deserve,” Jim Hoffa, Teamsters General President, told the crowd.

The event featured an impressive lineup of speakers and the opportunity for education through dozens of workshops. And it brought together school bus workers and local union representatives to participate in a national dialogue, learn more about the school bus industry and the Teamsters’ role in driving up standards, all in preparation for a year of increased activity.

Hoffa noted the unprecedented success of the Teamsters’ Drive Up Standards campaign, which has brought 35,000 drivers, monitors, aides, attendants and mechanics into the union since 2006.

Rick Middleton, International Vice President and Chair of the Teamsters national school bus campaign, pointed to the union’s success in protecting workers’ rights at First Student as having laid the groundwork at other private, multinational school bus companies.

John T. Coli, International Vice President and President of Teamsters Joint Council 25, welcomed the Congress attendees to Chicago, and also gave a warm welcome to the newest Teamster members—the 270 Alpha School Bus drivers and attendants in Crestwood, Ill., who joined Teamsters Local 777 in an election held September 28. Alpha School Bus is one of 14 Cook-Illinois Corporation subsidiaries.

The national gathering of Teamsters looked at workers’ rights abuses and safety issues at National Express Group, parent company to Durham in the U.S. and Stock Transportation in Canada.

The event hosted global partners from Teamsters sister union “Unite the Union” in the U.K. and the International Transport Workers’ Federation, and even included a video-teleconference with trade unionists in Australia.



VICTORY at Alpha!

There were cheers and tears of joy when Alpha School Bus drivers and attendants learned that they had overwhelmingly voted to join Teamsters Local 777 in Lyons, Ill.

It was a hard-fought couple of years to get to this point and the Alpha workers persevered through it all.

"I cannot tell you how happy I am. We worked so hard for this for so long, and now we have our union," said Vanessa Robinson, an attendant. "We need respect, better bus conditions and a better work environment. This is a big step toward achieving all those things."

Drivers and attendants at Alpha had been working to organize since 2010. The company resisted their efforts, setting up a fake "union" called the Executive Committee.

The drivers and attendants did not give up. They held an

internal vote to affiliate with Local 777 in April 2011. Despite the strong 8-1 margin in favor of affiliating with Local 777, the company did not respect the workers' decision and refused to recognize Local 777 as their union.

The drivers and attendants remained determined to have a real union, reorganizing and filing for a National Labor Relations Board election in June 2012.

"This is a great victory for these workers, who had the courage and dedication to fight for what is right for such a long time," said Jim Glimco, Teamsters Local 777 President. "This is one of the hard-core, anti-union, low wage bus companies, and Alpha will now need to come up to the standards that these workers deserve."

"A Teamster contract will give the Alpha drivers and attendants an equal voice and the confidence to speak up without fear of discipline," said Olivia Morris, a driver.

Alpha School Bus is a subsidiary of the Cook-Illinois Corporation, the nation's sixth largest private provider of student transportation services.

The day before their election, the Alpha drivers were joined by hundreds of Teamster school bus workers, Teamster leaders, community, political and religious supporters at a "Rally for Respect."

The Alpha drivers and attendants had widespread support as they worked together to form their union with the Teamsters, including Teamster leaders and school bus members locally and nationally; Cook Action Network (CAN); ARISE Chicago and Chicagoland clergy; and Michael Hastings, Board of Education member, High School District 230 and candidate for Illinois State Senate (District 19).

Cook-Illinois workers have formed the Cook Action Network (CAN) and engaged in a long-term campaign to bring workers' rights and school bus safety to this company.

What Can You Do To Build Our Movement?

- Join our text message group so you can stay informed! Text BUS to 86466. (Standard message and data rates from your carrier may apply).
- If you are at Durham, Stock or Petermann, fill out a safety survey. Surveys will soon be available through your local union and online at www.driveupstandards.org.
- Attend a school board meeting and get to know your school board.
- Participate in national actions, which you can learn about by joining our text messaging group.
- Vote for candidates who support workers!

School Bus Workers Speak Up

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Watson and her coworkers are now working to negotiate a contract.

Corlene Isaac, a driver for STA in Jacksonville, Fla., observed the difference in wages and morale that she and her coworkers experienced after joining Local 512 in Jacksonville. Isaac directly thanked Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa for "bettering our lives."

Pedro Dalgado, a driver with Latino Express, talked about being fired by the company during organizing efforts. He and his coworkers are now members of Local 777 in Lyons, Ill. With the help of the Teamsters, Dalgado was reinstated at his job, and he and his coworkers are now fighting for a contract from the company.

"I am asked why we as part time workers deserve union representation. I think this is really important. And it's because we work," said Terry Riley, a driver with Durham in Albuquerque, N.M.

"I'm a Teamster and will always be a Teamster," said Hazel Robinson, a member of the Cook Action Network (CAN). Cook-Illinois workers formed CAN and are engaged in a long-term campaign to bring workers' rights and school bus safety to Cook-Illinois.

Teamsters Fight to Restore Unemployment

Georgia Labor Commissioner Cuts Earned Benefits



School bus and other educational workers were dealt an unexpected blow recently when Mark Butler, Georgia's Labor Commissioner, cut unemployment benefits to 64,000 workers without warning.

As a result of this decision, many workers were left hungry and nearly homeless this summer when they were laid off. Many were forced to visit a food distribution center Teamsters Local 728 in Atlanta set up to help feed workers and their families.

Teamsters Local 728 bounced into action, working with labor and community allies, to fight these shameless cuts by the Labor Commissioner.

The U.S. Department of Labor in Washington, D.C., determined in August that the Georgia Department of Labor had violated workplace laws by refusing to pay the benefits. They ordered Butler to rescind the ruling and pay the workers for lost unemployment benefits. He has yet to comply.

Jerome Irwin, a driver at First Student in Savannah, Ga., and a member of Local 728, is fighting for the reinstatement of these earned benefits. Irwin told his fellow Teamsters about this important issue at the recent Teamsters School Bus Workers Congress.

"Thanks to Teamsters Local 728, we are fighting this battle. Our fight here is not over with. We're just beginning to fight. We are not going to back off and let Mr. Butler get away with this," Irwin said.

The fight over earned unemployment benefits is not limited to Georgia. In July, legislation went into effect in Indiana that negatively impacts school bus workers' ability to collect unemployment during summer and periods when they are out of work.



**SIGN UP FOR UPDATES—
TEXT BUS TO 86466**

(message and data rates may apply)

Teamster School Bus Workers Ratify Bill of Rights

Teamster school bus workers recently ratified an historic School Bus Workers' Bill of Rights. This document was ratified unanimously at the 2012 Teamsters School Bus Workers Congress in Chicago. We hope you will share this important document with your coworkers and join us in the fight to make these rights a reality.

School Bus Workers' Bill of Rights

School bus workers have the right to:

- Bargain collectively, in good faith, in order to improve their situation;
- Freedom of association, including the right to join a trade union of their own choosing without interference;
- Be treated with dignity and respect at work and have a workplace free from prejudice, discrimination, bullying and harassment;
- A fair wage that permits them to live in dignity and medical help when they are ill;
- Fair and honest treatment regardless of race, gender, disability, nationality, religion, philosophical or political belief, age, sexual orientation, family status, trade union activity or any other factor. Protection against discrimination based on any of these factors;
- A safe workplace where the health and safety of workers is paramount and where workers can raise health and safety issues without fear of retribution;
- A workplace free from mental or physical coercion;
- Due process procedures to resolve workplace issues;
- Freedom of speech, including the protection of "whistle blower" activity for workers who attempt to expose illegal or improper activity; and
- The protection of law in an equal and fair manner when rights are violated.

If you would like to contribute to this newsletter, please contact Kara Deniz at 202-497-6610