



Building Material & Construction Trade

Teamster Building Material & Construction Trade News

James P. Hoffa, General President • C. Thomas Keegel, General Secretary-Treasurer • Ed Jacobson, Director BMCT Division

Employee Free Choice Now!

Teamsters Can Help Pass Legislation Expanding America's Middle Class

The fight for passage of the Employee Free Choice Act is really about the survival of the middle class and the American Dream," said Jim Hoffa, Teamsters General President.

The Employee Free Choice Act would make it easier for workers to form a union, thereby restoring fairness and the promise of the American Dream to millions of people who have been shut out for far too long. This legislation would swell the ranks of the American middle class while being the engine for economic growth and shared prosperity. This act will also help employees secure a contract in a reasonable period of time and toughen penalties against employers who violate the law. The legislation is supported by President Barack Obama, Vice President

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Milwaukee Construction Companies Vote Teamster

First Contracts Increase Wages, Benefits

Two construction material supply companies in the Milwaukee area recently voted in Teamster representation. Although Teamsters are well-represented in the area already, Badgerland Supply and NexGen Building Supply were two of the last companies to make the transition.

"I thought it would be a good thing for us to be Teamsters," said Jason Kubek, a five-year employee at Badgerland Supply in Waukeesha, Wisconsin. "My father is a union man, and my best friend is a union guy, so I had some understanding of what unions were about. Now that we're Teamsters, we are not only getting wage increases, we are able to work on big, commercial jobs." Commercial jobs, such as hospitals, are more profitable for construction companies since they are large-scale projects as opposed to residential

home construction.

The vote on the contract at Badgerland, which took place in November 2008, was a huge success. Everyone in the bargaining unit voted yes.

"We continue to set the area standard when we ratified this contract," said Tom Millonzi, Secretary-Treasurer of Local 200 in Milwaukee. "We won wage and benefit increases of at least \$9 per hour per employee. Plus our members don't have co-pays on insurance which is a great benefit in the current economic climate."

Badgerland Supply has 11 employees and is one of the largest wallboard firms in the state.

Further Success at NexGen

The most recent representation and contract victory in the building supply industry happened with NexGen Building Supply in April 2009.

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A Message From Division Director Ed Jacobson

Ready to Take the Lead

Our industry is going to see a boom from the Obama administration's focus on rebuilding our country's



infrastructure. Just think of the last time you drove across your state on the highway, or took an Amtrak ride from New York to Boston. You most likely encountered rough patches, or even completely closed sections of track, highway or even bridges.

But our skilled union brothers and sisters are up to the challenge. In this issue of the Building Material and Construction Trade Division newsletter we highlight one of our training facilities—its success and now its growth. Workers with access and knowledge to the skills required to complete a job, such as those taught at the training facility at Local 142 in Gary, Indiana, will be the most successful. And the work will be done right, the first time.

Along with the new administration's focus on infrastructure repair is a fresh respect for union labor. In Wisconsin, a large state with multiple metropolitan areas, the call for unionized construction work has gone out. Two recently nonunion companies there recognized the Teamsters as the bargaining agent for their employees. Now the firms are being sought out by companies with large projects (hospitals, office buildings). Word is spreading that being Teamster is an asset to the companies searching for quality workers.

Even though the economy has suffering, there is still a need to rebuild critical pieces of our infrastructure. Our members are ready to take the lead.

Employee Free Choice Now!

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Joe Biden, Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis, a majority of U.S. Senators and Representatives, and a majority of the American people.

“Even with the support of so many, a flood of corporate cash is being spent on a misinformation campaign on this issue. Suppressing unions is part of a larger effort by CEOs and business interests to prevent working people from getting their fair share,” Hoffa said.

Union Workers Make 28 Percent More

Working people are struggling to make ends meet today, and we are in danger of seeing the American Dream disappear. Too often, corporations and their CEOs aren't treating workers fairly. They cut back on health care benefits and give raises that don't even keep up with the cost of living, while CEO salaries and profits go higher and higher.

“These millionaire CEOs and others fighting the Employee Free Choice Act bully their employees who want a union, but these CEOs wouldn't work one day without a written contract that protected their benefits,” said Tom Keegel, Teamsters General Secretary-Treasurer. “Due to this mindset, the American middle class has lost a lot of ground and is in danger of losing more if we don't all get involved in this fight.”

An important way to help average people get their fair share is to remove unfair barriers to union representation and collective bargaining. The wages of workers in unions are 28 percent higher than those not in unions, and union workers are 62 percent more likely to have employer health coverage, and four times as likely to have a pension.

“The nation's economic mess didn't originate on the shop floor or from a union contract. It started at the highest levels of management. Their harmful ideas hurt the bottom line of their corporations. Wanting to deny workers the option of forming a union without management interference is another of their bright ideas,” Keegel said.

Setting the Record Straight

The corporate interests against the Employee Free Choice Act have incorrectly portrayed the bill as eliminating workers' rights to a secret ballot election. This is absolutely not true. The legislation simply gives workers, not bosses, the choice in how they decide whether to form a union, either through a majority of workers signing cards in support of the union, or through an election.

In reality, the corporate interests who are opposed to this bill are the same ones against their employees having a real opportunity of securing fair pay, health insurance, job security and a chance of living the American Dream. Greedy CEOs are realizing they are losing the ability to hold back change to a system that favors them, and they are engaged in an unprecedented campaign to mislead the public on the Employee Free Choice Act and anyone who supports it.

Please help the Teamsters Union make sure the middle class survives the current economic crisis by getting involved to pass the Employee Free Choice Act. For more information, visit www.teamster.org.

Local 142 Breaks Ground for Training Facility



Construction Jobs Increase in Indiana

Members taking part in training with Local 142's construction division training and apprentice school had been using the local union's parking lot and small, unused garage as office space. As of May 13, 2009, that all changed.

"We just broke ground for a new training facility," said Mitch Sawochka, the training coordinator and President of Local 142 in Gary, Indiana. "The local union purchased nine and a half acres and broke ground for the new facility in May. The building will have a classroom, offices and truck bays—all that we will need to conduct trainings.

"We offer driver training on CDL Class A, forklift, dump truck, semi and tri-axes, truck-mounted crane/boom, water truck, flatbed, articulated dump, fuel truck, sweeper truck and equipment

transport truck," Sawochka said

Local 142's program is one of six Teamster apprenticeship programs in the country which prepare and train skilled workers for the construction industry.

On average, 10 members participate in training at a given time. Their first course is training and certification for a Class A Commercial Drivers License (CDL). Once their training is complete they can bid on more senior construction jobs.

John Mago was part of the first class of construction industry apprentices to be trained at the Local 142 facility. His training began on August 4, 2008 and ran through November 4. Now he, along with other apprentices, is working at the British Petroleum (BP) Canadian Crude project facility in

nearby Whiting, Indiana.

"We trained from 7 a.m. until 3 p.m. every day at the union hall," Mago said. "All of the types of vehicles we might use on the job were tested: full-size bus, pickup truck, tri-axle dump truck, construction trailer and flatbed trailer. There was a lot of information to soak up during the intense training. Our instructor, Joe Scibor, was terrific. We all respect him."

"The training was a career change for me," said Kenneth Ingram, a member since August 2008. "My former business was in custom homes, but the market went south. Luckily a neighbor told me about the new training available at the Teamsters union hall. Now I have a job as an assistant foreman at the Fluor warehouse which supplies building materials to the BP facility in Whiting.

The diversity of work in the Gary, Hammond and Chicago areas is huge and generates more construction work hours than anywhere else in the country, according to the local union.

"We try and match the needs of projects in the area," Scibor said. Scibor, a 37-year Teamster is the local's certified training instructor.

"It's a good program and I hope to have my two sons go through it soon. It would be a way for them to build for the future," Ingram said.

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Represented by Teamsters at their location in Illinois, this was the first union contract at the site in Wisconsin.

"Now all the employees at NexGen in Milwaukee have a contract which spells out their vacation time, regular pay rate and Saturday pay rate," said Tom Benvenuto, business agent at Local 200. "At NexGen they take on contracts for drywall, insulation and other parts of the wall board industry."

"Having a union contract is a good thing," said Stan Szopinski, a 12-year employee at NexGen. "Right now jobs are so scarce in the construction industry that unless you are union you are just going to get the scraps. Now the contractors know we are union and, we are getting more

opportunities."

Members at both Badgerland and NexGen are now part of a company-funded 401(k) plan. "The new contracts both have provisions for members to be part of a 401(k) plan solely funded by the employer, something none of them had before," Millonzi said. "In these tough economic times we wanted to be sure our members are protected both as members and as retirees."

Already the number and size of the jobs are increasing at Badgerland and NexGen. "The union contract is opening new doors for us. It will help us get through the tough times," Szopinski said.

A Message from General President James P. Hoffa



MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

There are many ways for Teamsters to get involved and show support for the Employee Free Choice Act, the most important legislation affecting America's middle class in decades. Our communities, friends, neighbors and members of Congress need to hear from real people why unions are important, and the sooner the better. This bill has broad support, but billions of dollars are being thrown at a misinformation campaign run by anti-worker groups and people are starting to believe the lies about this legislation.

It's important to let your elected officials in D.C. know that you support the bill. When calling or writing, it's helpful to include your story about how you have benefited from a union or about management intimidation during your union election. The web site for the Teamsters Union, at www.teamster.org, has a wealth of material on writing, e-mailing or talking to your elected representatives. If you want to get directly in touch with your congressional representative's office, you can call the Capitol switchboard at 800-828-0498 or e-mail them through www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml.

Teamsters can also help correct myths while at the same time helping our communities understand why the Employee Free Choice Act is necessary to fix a broken system. Newspapers welcome letters from readers and you can usually find out how to send a letter to the editor by looking on the newspaper's opinion page. Sample letters that you can adapt and responses to the most common arguments are on the Teamsters Union web page devoted to the Employee Free Choice Act.

I urge every Teamster who cares about America's middle class to get involved and make your voice heard on this issue.

DRIVE is a political committee that furthers labor-related goals, including making contributions to support candidates for local, state and federal offices. Individuals may refuse to join or contribute without fear of reprisal.

Find out more about this exciting program by talking to your local union, or on the web at www.teamster.org/drive

Take a Stand for Working Families

Visit www.teamster.org

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