

Communications

**TEAMSTERS
ONLINE**
[HOME](#) [ABOUT IBT](#) [PRESIDENT HOFFA](#) [SEC-TREASURER KEEGEL](#) [SEARCH](#) [JOIN IBT](#) [DIVISIONS](#) [DEPARTMENTS](#)
[Teamster Home](#) > [Communications](#) > [Teamster Magazine](#) > October/November 2000

[Department Services](#)
[About our Publications](#)
[Teamster Magazine Back Issues](#)
[Teamster Leader Back Issues](#)
[Media Guide](#)
[Media Kit](#)
[Press Contact Info](#)

Teamster Magazine October/November 2000

Table of Contents

- [Teamsters Union Rallies Members to Support Gore Lieberman](#) Ending months of suspense, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters pledged its support for the Democratic ticket of Vice President Al Gore for President and Senator Joe Lieberman for Vice President. >>>
- [SkillsUSA Finals Find Home in Kansas City](#) Teresa Hellman runs an annual vocational skills contest where nearly 4,000 students from around the country compete in disciplines as diverse as Advertising Design, Air-cooled Gasoline Engine Technology, Practical Nursing and Welding. >>>
- [Mechanics Thwart Privatization](#)
- [Teamsters Force Airborne to Adopt Strict New Anti-Harassment Program](#)
- [Teamsters National Black Caucus Sets Course for the New Century](#)
- [Windy City Window Factory Win](#)
- [Teamsters Join Forces in Overnite Battle](#)
- [Tennessee Teamster makes Christmas a year-round event](#)



Gore Lieberman in 2000

Teamsters Union Rallies Members to Support Ticket

Ending months of suspense, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters pledged its support for the Democratic ticket of Vice President Al Gore for President and Senator Joe Lieberman for Vice President.

"Our 1.5 million members demand that the occupant of the White House put the interests of working families first," said Teamsters General President James P. Hoffa. "In both word and deed, Al Gore has shown he will be responsive to our membership and to all American workers."

In a conference call on September 7, the union's General Executive Board voted unanimously to endorse the Gore Lieberman ticket.

A Strong Labor Record

Throughout his extensive legislative career, Al Gore has demonstrated consistent support for worker issues. As a U.S. Senator from Tennessee, Gore voted with working families 88 percent of the time -- not an easy feat in a "right-to-work-for-less" state.

Gore has worked to:

- * Protect workplace health and safety;
- * Maintain community wage standards;
- * Strengthen Social Security and Medicare;
- * Prevent the return of company unions;
- * Defend the 40-hour work week;
- * Enhance the political voice of workers; and
- * Safeguard the right to organize and collectively bargain.

Progress on the Trade Issue

The Teamsters Union has long insisted that trade rules must be fair, not just free. While the union continues to have differences with both major parties on this issue, Gore has pledged that labor, human and environmental rights will be included in future trade deals, and he has promised that the Teamsters and other unions will be involved in the discussions.



In fact, the Democratic Party Platform says that trade should be used to lift up standards around the world, not drag them down here at home.

"The test of open trade in the years ahead," it says, "is whether it empowers the many and not just the few, whether its blessings are widely shared, whether it helps to lift the poor out of poverty; whether it works for working people."

Working Hard for Working Families

This November, Teamsters can make the difference as to who will lead this nation in the new millennium. As the largest private-sector union in the world, that is especially strong in the key battleground states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois and Michigan, the Teamsters are poised to make the difference in the race.

That's why it's so important to become involved in the remaining days before November 7. By volunteering time and resources manning phone banks, leafleting outside work sites and participating in DRIVE, Teamsters will lead the nation in protecting the interests of working families.

Delay? What Delay?

The media have speculated extensively as to why the Teamsters waited until now to decide on an endorsement. But as Teamsters Political Director Chuck Harple points out, there's really no mystery:

"This is a timeline we set up a year ago. We polled the membership last fall, and at the time, there was no clear preference.

So, we waited until the various candidates had fleshed out their positions on issues important to working families. We waited until after the struggle over Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China; until after the major party conventions; until after the party platforms were approved; until after the vice presidential choices were made; and until after the Gore/Lieberman campaign agreed to key Teamster trade-related demands.

The membership and leadership were polled again. What emerged was a decisive preference for Al Gore over George W. Bush--and proof that the Teamsters' bipartisan approach to politics empowers our members and their families."

Appointments with Destiny

The next President of the United States will make key appointments that will directly affect America's working families.

While much attention has been directed at the future composition of the Supreme Court--which is indeed vitally important--union workers have a particular stake in who will serve on the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

During the 1980s and early 1990s, the NLRB, stacked with Reagan/Bush recruits from corporate and right-wing law firms, consistently ruled against workers in representation disputes--when it ruled at all. Disputes were permitted to languish for years, while employers declared open season on their workforce.

As voters go to the polls this November, they have a clear choice: whether to turn the clock back to that reactionary era, or to continue to level the playing field on which labor and management face each other.

Gore On the Line

Al Gore Stands with Strikers

Vice President Al Gore has stood with Overnite strikers, but he also stepped up to the plate with workers around the United States. Gore has walked picket lines with:

- * Engineers at Boeing in Seattle
- * Hotel Workers in Bloomington, Minnesota
- * Janitors in Los Angeles
- * Nursing Home Workers in Hartford, Connecticut
- * Workers at Titan Tire in Des Moines, Iowa

"We need a president that offers more than just words. Al Gore has had the courage not just to stand with working people, but to walk with them on the picket line," said Ken Wood, International Vice President and Local 79 President.

What Can You Do? Plenty!

Here's what you can do to help achieve victory in this election.

- * Walk a precinct. Literature distributed door-to-door is a vital key to educating voters, and your personal contact gives the union message greater credibility.
- * Join a phone bank. Thousands of phone calls are made to likely supporters in the period leading up to and including Election Day to help get out the vote.
- * Offer a ride. Many infirm and disabled voters or those lacking transportation need help getting to the polls.
- * Be a poll-watcher. By frequently reporting to your local or campaign office the voter turnout in your precinct, you can provide valuable information that helps target limited resources where they are needed the most.
- * Vote

[back to the top](#)

Teamsters to the Rescue

SkillsUSA Finals Find Home in Kansas City

Teresa Hellman needed help. She runs an annual vocational skills contest where

nearly 4,000 students from around the country compete in disciplines as diverse as Advertising Design, Air-cooled Gasoline Engine Technology, Practical Nursing and Welding.

But the people she had driving the forklifts and unloading the equipment for this massive undertaking were high school principals and volunteer speech coaches. They were enthusiastic, but not really up to the task of unpacking and repacking 15 trailers full of equipment that, when set up, cover a space larger than five football fields.

"It didn't take a rocket scientist to see that I needed to call in the cavalry," said Hellman. "In 1994, before the Teamsters came in, it was like a comedy of errors. We knocked the head off a sprinkler, crashed forklifts into loading docks. It was a mess."

Enter Local 41

Unions have always supported SkillsUSA. It was started in 1965, with the AFL-CIO as a founding partner. It has grown to the point where it reaches 240,000 students annually. Union electricians, bricklayers, plumbers and pipe fitters have always been among its judges and coaches. So it was natural for Hellman to think of going to a union to solve her dilemma.

"I spoke briefly with someone at Local 41 about all this after the 1994 conference," said Hellman. "Then I had the great good fortune of sitting next to Phil Young at a labor luncheon."

Young, President of Local 41 and International Vice President, listened to Hellman's story. He saw a way his local could give back to the community and at the same time support a cause Teamsters have always held dear, training the next generation of proud, skilled American workers.

"SkillsUSA is a great program and Kansas City is a great place for its national competition," said Young. "Conference week has become a real highlight of our year. I'm very proud of our contribution."

MVP

Young tapped business agent Eldon Williams to line up Teamster volunteers for the 1995 conference. Both he and Hellman say Williams is the reason the project has been successful every year since.

"The first year it was a little hard to get the volunteers, so I relied a lot on friends and family," said Williams. "But every year it gets easier. People hear what a good time we have and how great the skills competitions are. They want to be a part of it. I need at least 20 volunteers a day, more at the beginning and end. Two weeks before this year's conference, I've already got every day covered but one."

Hellman thinks Williams is being modest about his own contribution.

"Heck, if you just count the Williamses he recruits, you've got a sizable number," she said with a chuckle. "Seriously I think the number of Teamster volunteers we get is a tribute to how well-respected both Phil and Eldon are by their brothers and sisters."

Three Williams sons and four Williams grandkids are now a part of the crew, along with at least 20 veterans who have come back every year. The arrangement has worked out so well for SkillsUSA that their national board recently voted to keep the competition in Kansas City through 2006.

"You can hear a lot of bad things about kids today," said Williams. "But watching the contestants and their teachers, you realize that there's a lot of good out there too. I don't want to be corny, but it's pretty inspiring."

[back to the top](#)

Throwing A Monkey Wrench In Township Plans Mechanics Thwart Privatization

"Privatization is a dirty, four-letter word," said Dover Township Committeeman Jerry Geoghegan. That simple statement was music to Tim Dalton's ears. For months he and his fellow Teamsters had waged a campaign to convince the Township Committee of exactly that.

Shot Across the Bow

"They were singing an entirely different tune when the township first called us in to discuss this," said Donato DiMola, Director of Public Employee Sector at New Jersey Local 97. "We represent more than 300 township employees. It was clear to me that every one of their jobs was at risk."

Tim Dalton services Dover Township's vehicles. His was the first department the township advertised for bids to replace. A shop steward at the township's Bay Lea golf course, Dalton's fellow mechanics also staff the police garage and the Department of Public Works. He attended that first meeting and was a part of Local 97's anti-privatization campaign from its inception.

"The Committee only sought bids for our 13 mechanic jobs, but they were making noises about the welfare department, the jail guards, everybody," said Dalton. "We had to get busy."



Mobilization

Local 97 President John Gerow put the full resources of his membership behind the effort. The campaign was on.

Teamsters packed the audience at several Township Committee meetings. Rallies were held, leaflets distributed and letters-to-the-editor placed. Over 1300 citizens signed a petition indicating that they were happy with the work of the township's Teamster employees and did not want their services privatized.

When the local Asbury Park Press started running stories, Gerow knew his brothers and sisters were hitting their mark. The stories were repeating Teamster analysis of privatization's pitfalls and false economies almost word-for-word.

"Everyone involved in the campaign should be proud," said Gerow. "I know I'm proud of them. They helped themselves, their families and their Teamster brothers and sisters."

Besides Dalton, Gerow especially credits the hard work and long hours put in by Business Agent Patrick Guaschino, DiMola, Steward Mike Gretkowski and mechanics Robert Helle and Ken Taylor.

Reason Triumphs

"In the end, this was a win for common sense," says Dalton. "The committee, including Mr. Geoghegan, thought there was a bunch of money to be saved by farming out our jobs. We were able to show their constituents -- meaning our friends and neighbors -- that it just wasn't true. Privatization just isn't in their best interest."

[back to the top](#)

Airborne Express Cleans Up Its Act Teamsters Force Company to Adopt Strict New Anti-Harassment Program

Joe Quigley has worked for Airborne Express for 14 years and most of that time hasn't been enjoyable. He's been on the front lines of a bitter battle with management for the last seven years as a shop steward with Local 25 in Boston, Massachusetts.

Up until a new contract was signed at the end of 1998, Airborne management purposefully harassed employees. Teamster workers were the victims of severe verbal and at times physical abuse.

However, Teamster unity has changed all that. As part of the new contract, the Local 25 members demanded that the harassment stop and forced the company to adopt a zero tolerance policy and launch a comprehensive new anti-harassment program.

The training programs teach managers how to better relate with employees. A formal complaint process has also been established with a joint company-union panel having final input on harassment complaints.

Airborne joined with the union in selecting an independent panel of experts to study the problem and report back on the effectiveness of the new programs.

"Today, our members are much more comfortable in the workplace," Quigley said. "The company is making a sincere effort to address the problem and conditions have definitely improved. Our unity at the bargaining table has changed the company for the better."

Airborne workers at Local 407 in Cleveland, Ohio have already used the complaint process to solve harassment problems.

"We had one Airborne facility where conditions were so bad that our people called it 'The Rock'," said Frank Burdell, a Local 407 Business Agent. "Now, the situation has turned around 180 degrees. Last week one of our members had a complaint that was dealt with by one meeting, to their total satisfaction."

As long as the Airborne members continue to use the anti-harassment tools gained at the bargaining table, conditions can only improve.

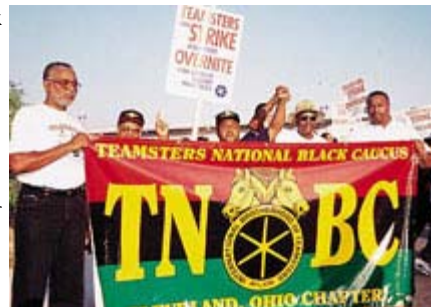
[back to the top](#)

Setting the Course On Its 25th Anniversary, the Teamsters National Black Caucus Sets Course for the New Century

On June 16 the Teamsters National Black Caucus (TNBC) convened a commemorative 25th Anniversary Educational Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Attended by more than 500 delegates from across the United States and Canada, the conference set the foundation for increased communication and networking among African-American Teamsters and other union members.

The four-day meeting focused on issues important to African-American Teamsters and





demonstrated how those issues impact the union as a whole. The discussions were framed around an in depth series of educational seminars. Topics included:

- * Building TNBC chapters;
- * Grievance panels and arbitration;
- * Labor law;
- * Communications; and
- * Diversity in the workplace.

In addition to the traditional workshops, the conference offered a workshop called "The Spiritual Side of Healing." It focused on non-traditional approaches to health and wellness.

"Diversity is the strength of our union," said Chris Silvera, TNBC Chairman and Local 808 Secretary-Treasurer. "And as we honor our diversity, we must plot the course that will build the Teamsters into the greatest union in the world."

Life Long Learning

Education Never Ends at the Black Caucus

Evelyn Stewart, a 22-year Teamster from Local 743 in Chicago, Illinois sat at her table on the final day of the Teamster National Black Caucus (TNBC) conference with a smile on her face.

"This conference was impressive," Stewart said. "I've been a Teamster for more than 20 years, a shop steward for three and I never attended the TNBC. Considering the quality of people I've met this year and the things I've learned, they won't be able to keep me away next year."

Lannis Shepherd, a 15-year Teamster from Local 745 in Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas and first-time TNBC attendee agrees.

"We have a training manager at work that is continually trying break the union with little things that skirt the rules," Shepherd said. "I learned tactics and strategies at the TNBC that will stop that behavior in its tracks. Attending this conference has made me a better Teamster."

TNBC's Future

An Interview with Chris Silvera

Chris Silvera envisions the Teamsters National Black Caucus uniting African-Americans and playing a critical role in the continued fight to organize the unorganized. Silvera talks about how far the TNBC has come in 25 years and his hopes for its future.

Q: What does the TNBC aim to accomplish by holding these annual meetings?

A: When I was elected chair, the TNBC was as fractured and divided as the national union itself. There was no communication, no sharing of ideas. By holding educational conferences, we aim to rekindle the spirit of the TNBC and continue helping the labor movement reach greater heights.

Q: Many of the educational seminars focused on health. Why?

A: You can't work and provide for your family if you're in bad health. Our union works hard to secure good benefits for our members, and it makes no sense for TNBC members not to take advantage of these benefits by staying in good health.

Q: One of the themes was "Recommitting to Union Principles and the Union Effort." What is meant by that?

All across our union we have members, and they're not as involved as they could be or should be. You can't have unity if no one participates. The TNBC stressed a recommitment to union principles to emphasize that it's not sufficient to just know your rights and your contract. You've got to get out and help other Teamsters wherever they may be. The Teamsters need to get back to that element of struggle that has been missing for the past few years. When you forget what it's like to struggle you begin to take the things you've earned for granted. When you take your union for granted so will your boss.

Q: How can TNBC members ensure that the nation's current economic boom continues to benefit them and their families?

Historically, during times of economic surpluses in this country, African-American working families are among the last groups of people to benefit and among the first to suffer when the economy slows down. Trade unionism gives us a vehicle to break this cycle. So let's use it more effectively by voicing our opinions! That's what this conference is all about, helping people get rid of that fear, educating themselves and planning a course of action.

Q: What does the future of the TNBC look like?

A: We are getting stronger and more mobile. Nothing makes me happier than to see TNBC members from different parts of the country sharing their challenges and suggesting solutions. The key to trade unionism in the 21st Century is finding a connective solution that lifts all Teamsters members up.

[back to the top](#)

Victory in the Cards

Windy City Window Factory Win

Add 480 proud new Teamsters to the roster. Chicago Local 714 has organized the warehouse, shipping and receiving workers at Silverline Windows, an Illinois manufacturer of windows and doors.

Voluntary Recognition

The Silverline campaign is an example of Teamster innovation in organizing tactics. Organizing campaigns are expensive. When the bosses turn to union-busting consultants, they pay through the nose. A big enough early demonstration of strength can convince them it will be money poorly spent.

"That's what happened at Silverline," said Robert Hogan, Local 714 Secretary-Treasurer. "We collected 350 signatures in a matter of days. The members who helped with the drive did a great job and the Silverline workers did even better. Management had the good sense to see that we had this thing won."

Silverline's decision to recognize Local 714 without demanding an election has paid dividends. Contract negotiations have gone swiftly and smoothly, with little of the acrimony that usually follows a hotly contested election.

A Better Future

Local 714's Hogan reports that the negotiations are almost finished and that Silverline's workers are looking forward to the superior wages, benefits and working conditions they will enjoy under their first strong Teamster contract.

"I feel like I've signed up for a better future," said Veronica Sandoval, a leader in the new bargaining unit. "My family deserves it and the Teamsters are helping me get it for them."



[back to the top](#)

A 'Fight for What's Right' Teamsters Join Forces in Overnite Battle

Eloy Montoto says the threats from inside Miami's 74th street Overnite terminal have been vicious: One corporate official vowed to break the Teamsters, that the strike against his company will last 'til "hell freezes over."

Montoto forecasts a bitter cold front moving in Overnite's direction.

As the strike against Overnite approaches its first anniversary, retirees like Montoto and workers from other Teamster-represented companies have joined ranks to help win a contract at Overnite and representation for all its employees.

Montoto's chapter is organizing picket details that put senior Teamsters in the public regularly alongside their Overnite brothers and sisters. Business agents walk, as well.

Organizing Director John Murphy commends those who've volunteered so far and says emphatically that a victory will require those volunteers -- plus new recruits -- to maintain a non-stop vigil at Overnite lines throughout the country.

"They have basically challenged the Teamsters union," Murphy said. "It's become a big, important campaign, one we cannot afford to lose and we don't intend to lose."

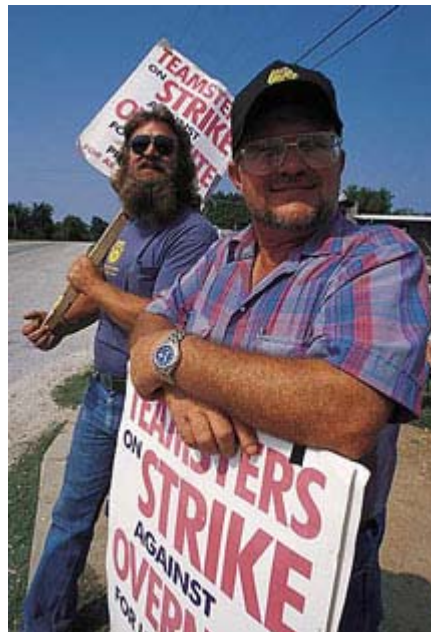
In the time-honored Teamster tradition, Murphy says, it's time to heap even more pressure on Overnite -- a company that has lost 20 percent of its freight volume and spent more than \$50 million since the strike began.

"Though we've had record participation from our members, now is the time to ask the people who have not participated to do their part in this campaign," he said. "When a company is in a losing situation money-wise, it's just a matter of time until you're going to force something to happen."

While walking picket or making donations to the Overnite cause are generous acts, Montoto says there is also a need to protect basic union principles for all freight employees.

"If we don't win Overnite, all the other companies are going to do the same thing," Monoto said among the retirees who volunteer each week to walk the Miami picket line.

Don Woolsey, an ABF driver from Springfield, Missouri, spent six months outside the Overnite terminal, weathering snow, rain and 90-degree plus temperatures on behalf of the drivers.



"You do it for all of organized labor," the 24-year Teamster said. "If you don't get people like this under control, my company is not going to sit and negotiate a decent contract when it comes up."

At his side is Mike McNish, 46, an Associated Wholesale Grocers employee and Local 245 member who recently spent two months locked out of his driving job. He volunteers on the Overnite picket line partially out of gratitude.

"The freight industry supported us when we were locked out," he added.

But there are other, deep-seated loyalties that drive him, as well. His father died of a heart attack at age 52 while sitting in the hallway of a hospital, requesting care though he had no insurance.

The Overnite battle, McNish says, is for people like his father.

"It's a fight that's got to be won," he says, "not only for the Teamsters but for workers all over the U.S."

[back to the top](#)

Forget the sleigh, Santa drives a truck Tennessee Teamster makes Christmas a year-round event

Ronnie Green has delivered Christmas gifts in mid-summer, well after dark, to families in Knoxville's most troubled housing projects. Dressed in full Santa regalia, he's held dying children in his arms as they breathed their final breaths.

For Green, president of Teamsters Local 519 retirees chapter, Christmas can't come just once a year: Too many children, he says, might miss out on the joy a visit from Santa can bring.

So, from his workshop on Santa Claus Lane on the outskirts of Knoxville, Tenn., Green delivers the spirit of Christmas on a daily basis -- throwing in necessities like food, diapers and clothing when he passes out presents to children beset by terminal illness or living in poverty.

He cites the conditions that led to his 12-year career as a benevolent soul in a bright red velvet suit: In the Knoxville area, Green says, wages hover around an average of \$8 an hour. Most families don't have health insurance or other benefits.

He sets up shop in tractor-trailer rigs -- Dolly Parton donated a sleigh that Green and his wife Kathy sit in as Mr. and Mrs. Claus -- marked with a "Year-Round Santa" logo. The doors and seats of the tractor are custom-embroidered with festive holiday designs.

And his fleet of nine trucks and 28 trailers go everywhere, from shopping mall parking lots to the winding roads of nearby Jellico Mountain.

"We set up under the canopy of heaven," Green said.

But delivery of the goods donated from businesses and agencies all over the region can also be done without spectacle.

"I operate like a thief in the night," he said. "If you're a single parent and you're hungry, we go in after dark. We don't want anyone to be embarrassed."

Annually, he greets 3,000 to 10,000 children dressed head to toe in Santa duds -- anywhere from 20 to 75 are dying of cancer or leukemia.

His reputation has spread so far, Green says, he worries little about how he'll provide aid to children. How many helpers does he have? "Ever how many I need," Green said matter of factly.

Green summons mechanics to help repair cars for needy families passing through the area. Law enforcement officers know to send families facing certain tragedy to Green for help. Fellow Teamsters have helped repair homes and put on roofs. He's even called for help from a nearby tavern -- and the patrons came straight to Green's shop.

Green is grateful, he says, to those who have helped the Year Round Santa program with donations of money, vehicles and goods. But he says it is he who has received the most from the children he visits.

"I feel like I've honestly met some angels," Green said. "I met them, and then they just disappeared off the face of the earth."

[back to the top](#)

General questions and media requests: communications@teamster.org
Teamster Magazine letters and story submissions: speakingout@teamster.org

[Home](#) | [About the Teamsters](#) | [President Hoffa](#)
[Secretary-Treasurer Keegel](#) | [Teamster Store](#)
[Search](#) | [Join the Teamsters](#)

©1997-2005 The International Brotherhood of Teamsters