

Obama Administration's Clear Vision

Last month I joined a small contingent of SEIU's top leaders in Washington, D.C. for two days of meetings with the Obama Administration. On Wednesday, April 16, we met with Vice President Joe Biden, who clearly expressed his desire to bring affordable health care coverage to all Americans, gain passage of the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), and to make college education affordable for all American families. The previous day, we met with U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda Soldis, who told our group that DoL planned to change its business model, ensuring that workers' interests—not solely the interests of the business community—would have a voice at the table. She added that a primary focus of her leadership would be on OSHA rules and regulations, an agency of federal government that had been gutted during the prior administration.

"Ask Not What Your Country Can Do...."

Unions do many things for many different people and most go unnoticed. The truth is that unions are simply a diverse group of people who unite for a common cause. Some would like you to believe the common cause that brings these folks together is greed. The following two anecdotes should dispel anyone of that notion

In Metropolitan America

IBPO Local 623 represents the Atlanta Police Department. It works hard every day to gain benefits for its members that allow them to live in their community with respect and dignity. However, Local 623 also provides a voice for officers and former officers, long forgotten by the public, who are suffering. Local 623 President Sgt. Scott Kreher, an IBPO national vice president, has brought to public attention the stories of five police officers who have suffered catastrophic injuries. Four were shot in the line of duty; another became a paraplegic when his cruiser was struck at an intersection. One case dates back to 1977. Recently, the city of Atlanta began denying these officers the medications, equipment, and treatments their injuries require. The indignities these men and woman have suffered since are chronicled by Atlanta's *The Sunday Paper*, and a video developed by the local and the national, which you can link to at www.ibpo.org. Sgt. Kreher and Local 623 promised they would march on City Hall if the city does not immediately address its policies about treating officers injured on the job.

In Your Small Town

In Scituate, Mass., a small seaside community, members of IBPO Local 461, like all Massachusetts police officers, have endured a difficult year as the public at large has responded to the world financial crisis by targeting public employees, especially police officers. Members of Local 461 face the uncertainty of not knowing what will be left of their benefit packages as budget cuts are made, changes in the rules governing police details are implemented, and the Quinn Bill, a law that provides incentive pay for officers with college degrees comes under attack. Yet, two weeks ago, the Scituate Police Union used money it had raised over the year to continue a tradition of sponsoring a trip for nearly 120 7th-graders to a Pawtucket Red Sox game, the Boston Red Sox AAA affiliate. Local 461 coordinated the trip, picked up the cost of the buses, and the game tickets, and at least 10 police officers volunteered to chaperone the middle school children. Officer James Bulman is the local president.

OPM Director Addresses Congressional Subcommittee

National Vice President Susan Anderson, president of Local R4-78 at the Martinsburg VA Medical Center in West Virginia represented NAGE at a hearing on Capitol Hill, where newly confirmed Office of Personnel Management Director John Berry addressed Congress for the first time. Dale Mills, Local R4-78 vice president, and Legislative Director Randy Erwin, also attended the House Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia hearing. OPM Director Berry offered a critical assessment of current personnel management, including recruitment deficiencies, the complexity of the federal pay system, and workforce diversity. He spoke of the need to identify best practices and reinvigorate the partnership process that dried up at most agencies during the Bush administration. We will be looking for Director Berry's support for HR 949 and S 362, bills that restore bargaining rights to Title 38 employees at the nation's VA medical centers.

NLRB Nominees Offer Bright Ray of Hope

President Barack Obama recently announced his first two nominations to fill vacant seats on the National Labor Relations Board. Both nominees are highly distinguished and well qualified for these positions. By announcing nominees with such extensive worker-friendly backgrounds, President Obama has taken a step towards evening the odds for our members and the working families of America.

The nominees are Craig Becker, who currently serves as associate general counsel to both the SEIU and the AFL-CIO, and Mark Pearce, a life-long labor attorney and founding partner of the Buffalo law firm Creighton, Pearce, Johnson & Giroux.

Thank You to the IAEP Community and Welcome To Its New Members

It is only fitting that during National EMS week that I take the opportunity to salute all EMS professionals who are saving lives every day across the country, while at the same time recognize those whose dedication and hard work on behalf of the IAEP continue to change the Emergency Medical Services profession.

I would also like to welcome Jack Kennedy and his colleagues at Belchertown (Mass.) EMS who voted by an overwhelming margin to join the IAEP, and the professional EMS providers from Bristol Hospital (Conn.) who recently voted to join the IAEP, becoming the first unionized employees at the hospital. It takes guts to take the first step.

IBPO Continues Hot Southern Organizing Drive

More than 300 federal police officers in the Tidewater, Virginia area voted to join the IBPO by a wide margin after waiting more than a year for the Federal Labor Relations Authority to schedule an election. The organizing drive to re-gain the FPOs was led jointly by National Vice President Paul Birks, a former Springfield (Mass.) police officer and Executive Board member Michael McKenna, who is an active duty officer with the Norfolk Police Department (Va.). The two National officers explained to the federal police officers that despite promises made by other unions, the IBPO, with a history steeped in the federal sector, is the best-suited labor union to negotiate the complex changes taking place at federal police agencies since 9/11.

Meanwhile, nearly 800 municipal police officers employed by the city of Richmond (Va.) and 475 officers who wear the uniform of neighboring Chesterfield also voted to join the IBPO in two great election victories.

Union Corrections Officers Earn Gains During Difficult Days

IBCO members employed at the Berkshire House of Correction (Mass.) and the Suffolk County House of Correction (Mass.) ratified new contracts with impressive financial packages and significant language improvements. Local 297 Chief Steward Kevin Nolli at Berkshire was pleased with securing a nine percent pay raise over the life of the contract, but equally as pleased with the new language for seniority, shift bidding, and layoffs.

For Local 298 members at Suffolk the big victory was locking in the nine percent raise as well as settling the contract before a proposed move of the county agency to the state government, an act Local 298 President John McLaughlin was sure would have resulted in increases in health insurance premiums for members.