

ROLLBACK OF WORKERS’ RIGHTS AT STAKE IN NOVEMBER

A MESSAGE FROM GENERAL PRESIDENT JAMES P. HOFFA



Teamster members and other workers are facing a significant political challenge in this election year. Big business and corporate apologists are continuing their push to strip unions of their ability to collectively bargain by pushing so-called right-to-work (RTW) legislation. And if they are successful, more workers could lose their rights on the job.

Such efforts have already been successful in West Virginia, where earlier this year the Legislature overrode the veto of the governor to implement RTW and roll back the state’s prevailing wage law. While supporters there promised more jobs will result from the move, history shows us that lower pay for residents will be the likely result. And that’s not something West Virginians, or anyone else, needs.

But what happens if this country’s voters decide to elect candidates in November who don’t represent workers’ values? Given the current make-up of Congress and many state legislatures, it is definitely possible that RTW could become a reality in more states or even nationwide. And that would be devastating for millions of families.

Those living in RTW states have a higher poverty rate than those in ones that support collective bargaining. In fact, nine of the 10 highest poverty states are RTW. That, in part, is attributable to lower salaries and benefits. Those with no rights at work make almost \$1,500 a year less. They are also less likely to receive employer-based health insurance or pensions.

Teamsters must help lead the charge to defeat efforts to spread anti-worker legislation. RTW is a ruse. Now pro-worker forces need to spread that message so everyday Americans understand what is at stake on Election Day.

James P. Hoffa

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DAIRY News

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DANNON: A GOOD EMPLOYER

Yogurt Maker’s Fair Pay Benefits Company

The labor movement may seem like it’s under attack from all corners. But’s that not the case with Teamsters and others who work for yogurt-producer Dannon.

The Swiss-based company known as Danone globally has a track record of being one of the most union-friendly employers worldwide. Proof of it is the numerous agreements Dannon has signed with the International Union of Food (IUF) workers since 1989.

Earlier this year, Dannon reached an agreement with the IUF on sustainable employment and access to rights. The agreement says the company commits to promoting full-time, direct employment for workers. The agreement notes, “Permanent direct employment provides employment predictability, social protection (including against arbitrary dismissal) and social benefits, which build the foundation for better living conditions.”

Art Burns, Secretary-Treasurer of Local 997 in Fort Worth, Texas, which represents about 100 Dannon workers at a plant in that city, said he has nothing but

compliments for the company and how it treats his members.

He noted that in the most recent contract negotiation, Dannon agreed after discussions with the Dairy Conference and its Director Rome Aloise to include its Teamster workers in the Western States Pension Plan. “It speaks volumes for Dannon to successfully negotiate a defined benefit plan,” Burns said. Additionally, the company in recent years granted paternity leave to its male workers (women there already get maternity leave).

The company also values the input of its union employees. Every year, a worker from each of Dannon’s facilities is brought to its Geneva headquarters for a labor council meeting. It’s the only such employer Burns said he’s aware of that does so.

As a result of its fair wages and good working relationship with its employees, Dannon benefits from having lower worker turnover. “They have a steady workforce,” Burns said. “It pays dividends.”

CALIF. WAGE HIKE SHOWS STRENGTH OF UNIONS

The Teamster-backed “Fight for \$15” campaign enjoyed its largest victory to date when California Gov. Jerry Brown announced last month he had reached a deal with the Legislature to increase the state’s minimum wage to the standard by 2022.

I was fortunate enough to be involved in the negotiations to get the bill written and was on hand with the governor at the event. It was the culmination of years of hard work not only for the labor movement, but workers across the country. While the push to raise the salary floor to \$15 had resulted in victories in about a dozen cities thus far, California became the first state to reach such a level. The salary hike will boost wages of about 6.5 million Golden State residents — or 43 percent of workers statewide.

For years, workers from coast-to-coast have taken to the streets to sound off on unfair wages. Just last November, under the banner “Come Get My Vote,” Teamsters joined workers from different industries and occupations who walked off the job in 270 cities nationwide, and rallied outside city halls in support of the Fight for \$15 movement.

While corporations were banking record profits in recent years, millions of workers were being left behind. This led to a growth in income inequality that made it increasingly difficult for workers to provide for their families, even as unemployment dropped nationwide.

Workers, however, are now seeing what happens when they stand together. And if they continue to do so, it will only grow from here.



Campaigns Show Bipartisan Backing for Infrastructure

Support for infrastructure investment is growing on both sides of the political aisle. Presidential candidates are talking about it. The media shows images of our deteriorating roads, railways and water systems. Something needs to be done.

Luckily, the Teamsters unveiled its “Let’s Get America Working” platform last year that provides a detailed roadmap for how this nation should prioritize such investment. It notes that maintaining, rebuilding and repairing our transportation, energy and water networks benefit workers by creating good-paying construction jobs that often pay prevailing wages. At the same time, such work also helps the economy by improving systems needed by businesses nationwide.

There are many infrastructure problems that need to be addressed. They include:

- More than 59,000 structurally deficient bridges nationwide, crossed by 215 million vehicles each day, according to the American Road & Transportation Builders Association;
- 54 percent of urban roads in substandard or out-of-date condition, according to “TRIP,” a national transportation research group;
- Rail infrastructure supporting an increased volume of oil tanker cars, which have increased from 9,500 in 2008 to more than 400,000 in 2013, according to the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, but without sufficient structural improvements to the rail system;
- Upgrading energy delivery infrastructure like pipelines and transmission lines; and
- Replacing pipes in aging water systems to avoid lead contamination like what’s happening in Flint, Mich.

Rebuilding, repairing and reinvestment doesn’t just need to be about transportation and energy projects. It can be about rebuilding and repairing the trust between government and workers by reinvesting in the people that have and can continue to make this country great. Better pay will lead to more spending and improve our quality of life. That way we all win.

EXPOSING CORPORATE DIRTY TRICKS



DOL Rule Change Sheds Light on Anti-Union Tactics

It is clear to most people that corporations hold numerous advantages over everyday Americans when it comes to power in the workplace. But thankfully, the Obama administration just took a step to close a loophole that will shine a spotlight on those engaging in anti-union activities.

The Labor Department issued its final “persuader” rule language in March after nearly five years of consideration which will require management consultants and attorneys involved with creating anti-union propaganda to disclose their efforts to dissuade workers from organizing and collectively bargaining. Previously, these firms could avoid reporting such work as long as they did not directly contact workers.

A new policy was needed because nearly three-quarters of companies hire outside consultants and attorneys to try and defeat organizing drives. Yet these firms-for-hire could shield their activities due to an overly broad interpretation of the Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959 (LMRDA).

“For years, big business has taken advantage of the nation’s broken system. The Teamsters have seen their

work first hand,” said Rome Aloise, an IBT International Vice President and director of the Teamsters Dairy Conference and Food Processing Division. “They’ve paid millions to consultants and law firms to do the dirty work of misdirecting and intimidating employees. In exchange, these same companies publicly could wash their hands of the whole thing.”

The rule change puts these union-busting consultants and lawyers on equal footing as employers who must disclose such activities under LMRDA. And it also levels the playing field with unions, who are required to file detailed financial disclosure forms each and every year that includes receipts and expenditures.

With this policy shift, the federal government is saying it won’t allow corporations to tamp down on the collective bargaining rights of workers across the country. Workers deserve a fair shake on the job. But too few policymakers at the federal and state level have been willing to stand up for hard-working Americans who are just trying to earn enough to support their families. These changes to the persuader rule don’t solve the problem entirely. But they are a start.