

Francisco, Thacker Re-elected by Acclamation to Lead NCFO

Devita, Moses and Williams also Returned to NCFO Board

NCFO President George Francisco and Secretary-Treasurer John Thacker have been re-elected by acclamation to three-year terms as NCFO's top leaders.

Similarly re-elected were NCFO Executive Board Members, General Chairmen Dean Devita and Mike Williams and Chapter 320 Business Manager Mike Moses.

By virtue of his victory, Francisco will also serve another term as a Local 32BJ vice president. Thacker, Devita and Moses will be members of the Local 32BJ Joint Executive Board, and Williams will serve on that board as a member of the Local 32BJ Trial Committee, sitting in on proceedings involving NCFO members.

The election was governed by the Local 32BJ Constitution. Each NCFO candidate for office was required to submit a nominating petition signed by at least two percent of the membership (168 signatures), by 6 PM on July 20.

Meeting three days later, the Local 32BJ Elections Committee declared the five NCFO nominees elected by



NCFO officers and executive board members have been re-elected by acclamation. Shown (from left) are: Executive Board Member Dean Devita; President George Francisco; Secretary-Treasurer John Thacker; and Executive Board Members Mike Williams and Mike Moses.

acclamation, as all five ran unopposed. The NCFO leaders were re-elected as part of the Stand Together Team headed by Local 32BJ President Mike Fishman, who also was re-elected by acclamation.

"I know I speak for all of us when I say that we are grateful for the continued trust of the NCFO membership," says Francisco. "We will work hard every single day to show that trust is well placed." ✨

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Obama Transport Picks Good for Union Workers

In addition to President Barack Obama's high-profile appointments of Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis and Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, his many appointments to head up agencies and boards bode well for union members working in transportation:

Federal Transit Administration – Peter Rogoff, who served for 14 years as the Democratic Staff Director of the House Transportation Subcommittee;

Federal Railroad Administration – 5th generation railroader Joe Szabo, Illinois state legislative director for the United Transportation Union;

National Mediation Board – Former Association of Flight Attendants President Linda Puchala as chair, and reappointment of Harry Hoglander, former executive vice president of Air Line Pilots Association;

Surface Transportation Board – Daniel Elliott, associate general counsel of the United Transportation Union;

National Transportation Safety Board – Deborah Hersman, who has served on the board since 2004, after many years as a Senate staffer focused on transportation issues.

Ask President Francisco

Q What can we do about politicians who make promises to us but then break them after they're elected?

—Lisa Sommers, Chapter 736
Lincoln, Nebraska

A You raise an issue that has troubled the labor movement for a long, long time. Politicians want our votes and get-out-the-vote campaigns, our contributions and our volunteers. Once they are elected, some of them forget about working families while they cozy up to special corporate interests.

SEIU has developed an innovative approach to dealing with this problem head on.

At the 2008 SEIU Convention, delegates passed a resolution stressing the importance of continuing political action *after* Election Day in order to hold successful candidates accountable. "Starting today," one delegate said, "we are going to make sure that our elected leaders know how important it is that they keep their promises."

The resolution stressed the need to mobilize tens of thousands of volunteers not only during the election campaign, but in the months thereafter, to keep the momentum going for positive change and to not let lawmakers forget their commitments.

SEIU has followed through with a massive post-election effort of grassroots education, mobilization and pressure on key issues like healthcare and labor law reform.

In what I believe to be the first union initiative of its kind, the union also established a special \$10 million fund "to oppose elected leaders who turn their backs on these and other key issues for working people."

One such politician, U.S. Rep Al Wynn (D), represented a district in

the Maryland suburbs of Washington. The union backed a primary challenge by a true progressive. Today, Rep. Donna Edwards (D) is fighting hard in Congress for working families.

There is no "one size fits all" answer that would address every particular situation. Take Kentucky, where we are taking a somewhat different approach in this fairly conservative, heavily Republican state.



You may recall that Democrat Steve Beshear defeated incumbent Republican Governor Ernie Fletcher in the 2007 election. Beshear promised to restore union rights for state workers. Our union and the rest of organized labor worked hard for him. Voters from union households made up 25 percent of the voters in that election and Beshear got a whopping 71 percent of the union vote.

In June, 2008, Beshear did issue an executive order restoring union rights, but his administration did nothing to implement the order, evading, delaying, stonewalling, and being extremely unresponsive as NCFO and the other unions involved sought to give state workers the representation they deserve.

Increasingly frustrated, the unions began turning up the pressure, initiating a campaign to cut off all union political contributions to the Ken-

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NCFO PRESIDENT
George J. Francisco, Jr.

NCFO SECRETARY-TREASURER
John R. Thacker

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS
Dean Devita
Michael A. Moses
Michael H. Williams

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tucky Democratic Party until justice was done.

That fairly quickly led to a meeting with Governor Beshear, who apologized for not having been directly involved in making sure the representation system was restored.

At our deadline, the NCFO representative in Kentucky, Robert Smith, was cautiously optimistic that things will turn around. If not, Smith says, Kentucky labor has other plans on the drawing board to hold Beshear accountable. ✨

CORRECTION

In our story on *American Idol* participant Ryan Johnson in the spring issue of *The Journal*, we incorrectly identified his NCFO Chapter in Cincinnati. It's Chapter 578.

Nebraskans Mobilize for Labor Law Reform

Corporate America has pulled out all the stops to try to block passage of the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) and any reform legislation that would restore the right of American workers to freely join unions.

But, union activists around the country have been fighting back and answering corporate lies with the truth, while mobilizing to educate lawmakers. Hundreds of SEIU activists have come to Washington to get their message across.

Among them were Trish Muehlenkamp and Donna Moore, NCFO-represented food service workers in the North Platte, Nebraska, public schools.

They're living proof that a law requiring employers to recognize and bargain once a majority of employees sign up for union representation would work well.

They won their union representation thanks to NCFO organizing efforts on their behalf and a "card-check recognition" agreement in place with their employer, Sodexo.

They told their story on television, at several union events in Nebraska organized by NCFO and SEIU, and in Capitol Hill offices.

"After getting our union voice, we won dignity and fairness on the job and better wages and conditions," says Moore, assistant chief steward of her unit. "That's a win for the employer, too, because a happy worker is a more productive worker," adds Chief Steward Muehlenkamp. ✨

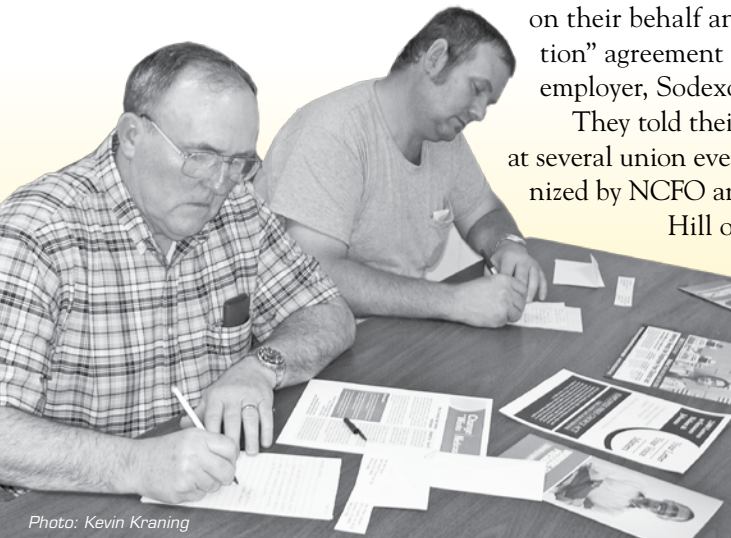


Photo: Kevin Kranning

▲ Chapter 403 members Gregg McGinn (left) and Tom Dimmitt write letters to Nebraska's two United States Senators urging support for reform legislation to restore the right of American workers to freely join unions. A recent Cornell University study shows that employers have become increasingly aggressive in threatening and firing workers who try to organize.



▲ Trish Muehlenkamp makes the case for labor law reform to Jason Prokrop, legislative assistant to Senator Ben Nelson (D-NE) in his Washington office, one of several offices of Nebraska lawmakers she visited along with Donna Moore. "The middle class is being destroyed in this country," says Muehlenkamp, "and restoring the right to organize is crucial to restoring the middle class."



▲ NCFO-represented food service worker Donna Moore heads towards a U.S. Senate office building. Several days of SEIU training prepared her and hundreds of other member lobbyists to effectively carry the union's message to Senators and Representatives.

▼ NCFO General Chairman Jim Larreau takes a question during a union meeting on the Employee Free Choice Act. Flanking him (from left) are NCFO-represented food service workers Donna Moore and Trish Muehlenkamp and Jane Fleming Kleebe, SEIU Nebraska state director. Four meetings were held in the state to educate and involve members of NCFO and other unions in the fight for labor law reform.



Photo: Kevin Kranning

INSURANCE COMPANIES AND THE HEALTHCARE CRISIS: Are They the **Solution** or a **Big Part** of the **Problem**?

That there is a healthcare crisis in our country is undeniable:

- 47 million have no insurance; 25-50 million more are underinsured.
- Absent sweeping reforms, there will be 72 million with no coverage by 2040.
- Healthcare eats up 18 percent of our gross domestic product. Unchecked, it will consume 34 percent by 2040.
- Insurance costs are taking big bites from paychecks and gobbling up raises. By 2016, the cost of insurance for an average family will hit \$24,000 per year.
- Medical bills are involved in 60 percent of personal bankruptcies, and 75 percent of these bankruptcies are by families with health insurance.

Okay, so healthcare and insurance are expensive. That's just the way it is, right?

Spending More, Getting Less

In 2006, the United States spent \$6,714 per person on healthcare—much more than any other country. As Chart I shows, we were spending more than twice as much as countries like Sweden, the United Kingdom, France and Japan.

Aren't we healthier because we're spending more?

Unfortunately, as Chart II illustrates, that's not the case. One measure of overall health is how long, on average, people live. In the United Kingdom, people live 1.3 years longer than in our country, while in Sweden and

France they live three years longer, and 4.6 years longer in Japan.

In fact, we rank 24th among industrialized nations in life expectancy. Canadians live, on average, an extra 2.6 years, while Canada spends only 55 percent as much as we do per person on healthcare.

Cutting Waste

One major reason people live longer in Canada and the other countries

CHART I
Spending More than Any Other Country...

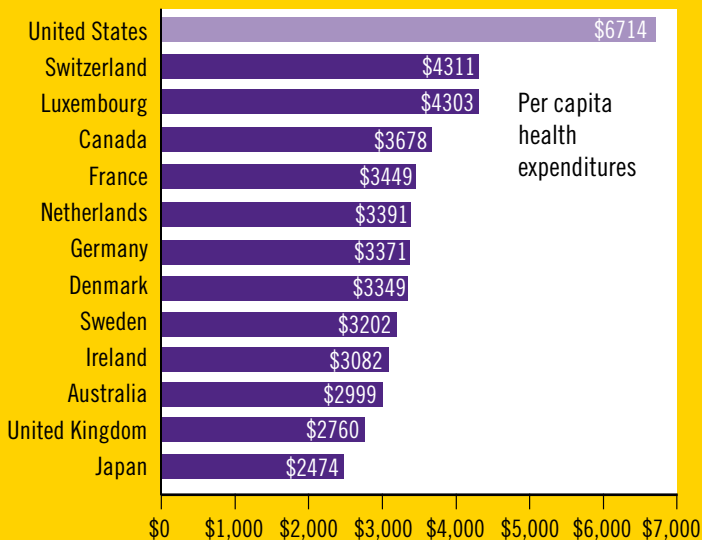
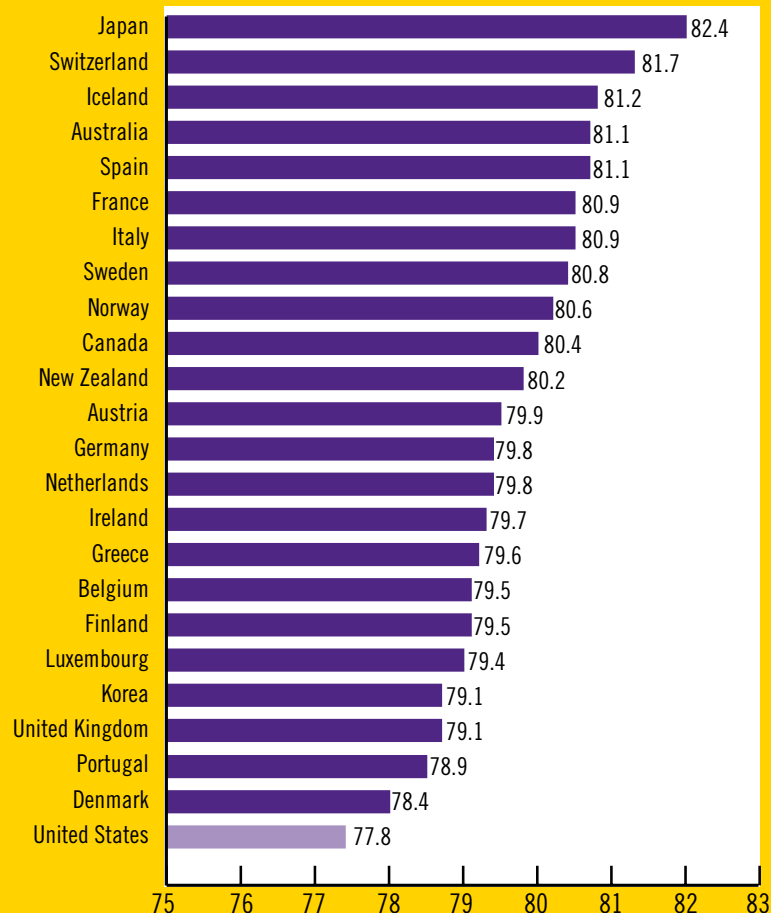


CHART II
...But Lagging in Life Expectancy



Source: OECD Factbook 2009: Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics - ISBN 92-64-05604-1 - © OECD 2009

mentioned above is better access to healthcare. All of these countries have national healthcare systems that cover everyone: benefits are not tied to employment, but largely provided through a single-payer system funded by tax revenues.

One major reason these systems deliver better health at less cost is that a huge source of waste is largely eliminated: private insurance companies.

There are about 1,300 private insurers in the U.S. and they add enormous bureaucratic costs to healthcare—especially when profits, large CEO salaries, advertising and marketing are figured in. Only three percent of Medicare funds are absorbed by administrative costs. For the average commercial carrier it's 19.9 percent.

Moreover, to maximize profits, insurance companies often seek to limit access to costly treatments and deny—or strip—coverage from high-cost customers or groups. The right of patients to choose their doctors also grows more and more restricted.

Overall, the waste built into private insurance costs amounts to roughly a billion dollars per day. That's a trillion dollars every two-and-a-half years.

Roadblocks to Change

Back in the 1930s, President Franklin Roosevelt backed off from including national health insurance in Social Security because of strong opposition from the American Medical Association (AMA).

The AMA continues its opposition, but according to numerous polls, a majority of American doctors now want national health insurance.

Repeatedly, polls also show that a strong majority of Americans also would welcome a “Medicare for all” system.

In May, President Barack Obama admitted that “If I were starting a system from scratch, then I think that



Nebraskans Mark Blanco and Julie Fitzsimmons of Alliance NCFD Chapter 861 join thousands of other union activists at a June healthcare reform rally at the U.S. Capitol. Support for a public health care plan allowed to compete with private insurers was a key focus of the rally.

the idea of moving towards a single-payer system could very well make sense. That's the kind of system you have in most industrialized countries.”

Yet President Obama has not proposed such a system, citing the “disruption” it would cause to one-sixth of our economy—the medical system dominated by private insurance.

Health Industry Power

But there's another, much bigger reason: the enormous power of insurance and pharmaceutical companies, which is on display in their relentless campaign against Obama's proposal for a public option. It would be open to all Americans and could compete with insurance companies. The AMA has endorsed it.

These industries boast the largest lobbying and political operations in the country. They have spent \$2.8 billion on lobbying since 1998 and handed out \$76 million in campaign contributions just for the 2008 elections (all paid for out of insurance premiums).

They are funding front groups to oppose the public option, and displaying enormous hypocrisy while doing so. These same companies demanded—and got—the right to compete against Medicare through Medicare Advantage. They get a government subsidy of

\$7.5 billion per year and charge seniors 12 percent more on average.

Much of their firepower is focused on attacking what they call “socialized medicine,” particularly as it is supposed to exist in Canada, arguing that President Obama's plan for a public option will inevitably lead to “government control of healthcare decisions.”

But what Canada has is social *insurance*. Most doctors are in private practice, with Canadians free to choose their doctors. Canadian doctors don't need multiple clerical assistants to hassle with insurance companies and file forms. They just care for patients and collect from the single insurance fund, which in Canada is called Medicare.

Meanwhile, the American public is fed up with our broken healthcare system, which President Obama's Council of Economic Advisers says is on an “unsustainable path.”

An extremely broad coalition of unions and other organizations is pushing hard for sweeping reform, and a *New York Times*/CBS News poll taken in June found 72 percent of those polled wanted “a government-run health plan comparable to Medicare [to be] available to everyone.” That's the public option.

At the very least, Americans want the right to choose. ✨

A Labor Day of Love

Like his father before him, Chapter 266 Steward Joe Gullo, Jr. is a dedicated union man, but he's never been able to participate in a union Labor Day picnic.

That's because in the Gullo family, Labor Day means the 21½-hour Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) telethon and an even longer telethon on the local access cable television in Dunkirk, New York.

Gullo's mother had three brothers with Muscular Dystrophy (MD)—a group of genetic, hereditary muscle diseases that weaken the muscles that move the human body. The brothers all had the most serious kind, Duchenne Dystrophy, which is always fatal.

Joe, Sr. began organizing door-to-door fundraising drives with other affected families in 1948 to raise money for MDA and launched a 24-hour radio telethon run from a gas station and broadcast on a local radio station.

He was one of the people who helped persuade comedian Jerry Lewis to get involved. Lewis started doing MDA four-hour telethons in 1952.

All of this came very close to home for young Joe Gullo, Jr., when his baby brother John Michael was diagnosed with MD in 1962—the same type that felled his uncles.

"This all became very personal to me," says Gullo, who has been a Chapter 266 member for eight years. "I began delivering canisters as a child and helped my father out any way I could."

John Michael died in 1984, at the age of 23.

"I made a promise to him before he died, that when I meet him again in heaven I will bring news of a cure," says Gullo.

The Jerry Lewis Telethons have helped bring this promise closer to reality through successful fundraising for medical research. The first Labor



Chapter 266 Steward Joe Gullo (left) and President Tom Dickerson anchor the Dunkirk, New York, edition of the Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Labor Day Telethon.

Day Telethon was in 1966, and it raised over \$1 million. By 1970, the event was broadcast coast-to-coast on 64 stations.

The 2007 telethon raised a whopping \$63,759,478.

While many stations run only parts of the 21½ hour program, the local Dunkirk edition broadcasts for most of the entire Labor Day weekend, breaking only to go to the national broadcast. Since his father passed away in 1996, Gullo has taken over his on-the-air duties.

Local entertainers perform and in recent years Gullo recruited a co-host, Chapter 266 President Tom Dickerson.

"Tom is great on TV with his personality and sense of humor," Gullo points out. "We took calls all night long for a couple of years. And



"I made a promise to [my brother] before he died, that when I meet him again in heaven I will bring news of a cure."

it really means a lot to me that the chapter now co-sponsors the event, and lets us use the hall. Many individual members of the chapter also help out," he continues.

Gullo's busy life also includes membership in the Active Army Reserves.

He's served two tours in Afghanistan and one in Iraq.

But he's always managed to be in Dunkirk for the Labor Day weekend. ✨

Stimulus Help for the Unemployed

Despite all the talk by many on Wall Street about the economy improving, the continuing loss of large numbers of jobs across the country paints a very different picture.

As of late June, 14 states had reached double digit unemployment figures, with the official national figure—already at 9.4 percent—predicted to go higher before the year is out. The real unemployment rate (including part-timers wanting full-time work and those who have given up looking) could be as high as 16.4 percent.

Unfortunately, NCFO families have not been immune to furloughs, with an estimated eight percent dealing with layoffs.

Luckily, President Obama and Congress came through with some additional help for furloughed workers in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (better known as the Stimulus Bill).

Extended Benefits

The law extends unemployment benefits, provides health insurance subsidies and tries to put a dent in a rather sobering statistic: only about 36 percent of the unemployed actually are getting unemployment benefits.

Since the 1985 COBRA law was passed, furloughed workers have had the right to keep their employer-provided health coverage for themselves and their dependents for up to 18 months, but only if they pay the entire cost. That's out of reach for most working families.

But now, thanks to the Stimulus Bill, employers have to pay for 65 percent of the full premium for up to nine months. The furloughed worker still has to come up with 35 percent of the money: still not easy, but much more feasible.

This benefit only applies to situations in which the separation from



"Look, buddy... I've been laid off for 8 months. I sure as hell can't afford a funeral right now."

employment was involuntary and occurred between September 1, 2008 and December 31, 2009.

For more information on this subsidized COBRA benefit, check out the Frequently Asked Questions that can be found on the U.S. Department of Labor website: www.dol.gov/ebsa/faqs/

Two Systems

NCFO members are covered under two separate systems of unemployment insurance. Railroad members get unemployment benefits under the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act of 1938 (RUIA), while other members are covered under the Social Security Act of 1935.

The most important difference is that RUIA is a single, national program and eligibility standards and benefits are the same in every state.

It's more complicated for other NCFO members, as each state administers a separate unemployment insurance program within guidelines established by

federal law. So benefits vary widely state to state, and so can eligibility.

But generally, the two systems yield similar benefits, and laws passed to allow for temporary extension of benefits apply to both.

Stimulus Boost

Such is the case with the Stimulus Bill. In the federal-state system, the basic 26-week benefit limit is extended an additional 20 weeks, with up to 13 more weeks of benefits available in high unemployment states. Moreover, funds are allocated to expand coverage to some furloughed part-time workers.

The formula is not identical under RUIA: here, for example, employees previously ineligible for extended benefits because they did not have 10 years of service in, now may be able to qualify.

For more information, rail members should contact their chapter chairman or the Railroad Retirement Board (www.rrb.gov). Other members should contact the nearest state unemployment compensation office.

Ten Tips for Tough Times

As an SEIU member, you have access to a wide variety of discounts and other Union Plus programs. Here are ten examples of ways Union Plus can help you and your family during these difficult times.

1. Save My Home Outline –

free help for families caught in the mortgage crisis

2. Free Credit Counseling –

to build a budget or repair your credit

3. Legal Services – free

30-minute consultation, 30 percent discount after that

4. College Scholarships –

2010 applications for union members and their families are now available

5. Movie Tickets – save up to 45 percent



6. Blockbuster® Movie Rentals –

pay just \$3.20 per rental

7. Consumer Reports Online –

learn how to spend wisely while saving 27 percent on a subscription

8. Goodyear Tires and Auto Service –

save 5 percent off tires, 10 percent off service

9. Home Heating Oil –

save \$200-\$300 this winter if you live in the Boston (MA) area, CT, MD, Southern NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI or Northern VA

10. AT&T Wireless –

save 10 percent off your monthly bill

To find out more about these and other Union Plus programs, go to

www.UnionPlus.org/benefits

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