

## NCFO Gears Up for November Election

**W**ith the key goal of electing both Senator Barack Obama as the next President of the United States and a Congress that will be friendly to working families, NCFO members are pitching in.

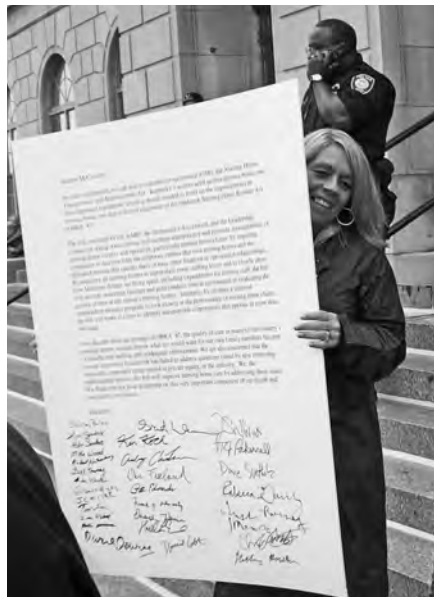
At *Journal* deadline, NCFO chapters were recruiting volunteers for SEIU's "Weekend Warrior" program in key battleground states like Ohio, and members around the country were participating in telephone banks, neighborhood walks and other voter education and get-out-the-vote activities.

In addition, NCFO chapter leaders are receiving training in fundraising for the Firemen and Oilers Political League at the union's first series of conferences (see pages 6-7).

NCFO's involvement in the 2008 elections got off to an early start, with NCFO and other SEIU volunteers participating in a week-long campaign to expose the negative record of U.S. Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY), one of the most anti-worker lawmakers in Washington.

Much of the focus was on McConnell's efforts to block much-needed legislation on nursing home reform.

"I'm familiar with the serious problems in nursing homes because my sister works in one," says Chapter 77 member Kim Spurlock, who spent a



**Despite the rain, Chapter 77 member Kim Spurlock stands with the blow-up of a petition in front of the Federal Building in Louisville, where anti-union Senator Mitch McConnell has an office. "He doesn't care about average people," she says.**

week gathering signatures on petitions, picketing McConnell's office and reaching out to voters.

Spurlock, who has been a registered Republican since she turned 18, says that McConnell—with his

reliance on backing by big corporations—is "too pro-business" and has a record that shows "he doesn't care about average people," she adds.

"We worked very hard but it was for a really good cause," she continues. "Getting involved this way made me feel really good about myself," she concludes.

McConnell—who voted 90 percent of the time in lockstep with President Bush and has but an 11 percent pro-working family career rating from the AFL-CIO—faces Democrat Bruce Lunsford in the November 4 election.

### Former NCFO VP Dies

**C**harles Loux, who during his more than 40 years as an NCFO member served as a steward, chief steward, business agent and president of Philadelphia Local 473 and as an NCFO vice president for four years, died recently at age 81.

Loux, a World War II veteran, first became an NCFO member in 1958 when he began working as a refrigeration mechanic for a Philadelphia supermarket chain. He was elected to the NCFO Executive Board in 1996 and served until his retirement in 2000.

## Improved Website Up and Running, NCFO Journal Nabs Three Awards

NCFO has just launched its new and improved website into cyberspace, while *The Journal* has been honored with three awards from the International Labor Communications Association (ILCA).

[www.ncfo.org](http://www.ncfo.org) is the place to find the latest news concerning NCFO, plus links to help you keep informed—and even register to vote. In the new "Members Only" section, you can find a copy of your collective bargaining agreement, the union Constitution and meeting notices for your chapter.

You also can find back issues of *The Journal*, which was recently cited for General Excellence in 2007 by the ILCA. In addition, our story "How National Freight Railroad Workers Got a Contract the Employers Didn't Want" received the Saul Miller Award for Best Collective Bargaining Story.

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# Ask President Francisco

**Q** I'm a strong supporter of Barack Obama for President, but I am worried. Do you think that the time has come when an African-American can be elected President of the United States?

—Steve Arnold, Chapter 413  
Waycross, Georgia



**A** Brother Arnold, I share your strong support for Barack Obama, and I hope and pray that America is ready to elect *this* African-American as our president.

I believe that Obama will be a president who stands up for working families and who has the vision, energy, intelligence and temperament to be a truly great leader.

I pray for his election for two reasons: the first being that electing John McCain would be a disaster for working Americans. McCain's handlers package him as an agent of change, but he'll deliver four more years of Bush's attacks on unions (which means on your wages and benefits), his everything-for-the-rich economic policies (at your expense) and his reckless foreign policy.

The second reason I'm praying has to do with the point raised by your question.

I must say that I have encountered a number of people who have said that they will not vote for Barack Obama because of the color of his skin. And I have talked with some other union leaders who have gotten similar feedback.

Racial prejudice undoubtedly continues to exist in our country. It's not news that candidates of color have sometimes led in the polls—and even in exit polls—but wound up losing. Some whites refuse to admit their prejudice, but won't vote for a candidate of color.

Our nation is in a situation in which a strong, progressive and articulate candidate like Barack Obama should have a very big lead.

George Bush is one of the most unpopular presidents in history. John McCain has backed Bush over 90 percent of the time and is pushing more of the same economic policies that have put working families and our economy in a deep hole. The economic news continues to be terrible: the loss of 84,000 more jobs in August; the seven-year decline in the real income of working families; and the total meltdown of Wall Street.

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**...working families are going to vote for the candidate who promises real hope and a break from Bush.**

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Plus, while Barack Obama has chosen the extremely competent Senator Joe Biden as his running mate, few Americans can possibly believe that Governor Sarah Palin is ready to step into the presidency.

It will be a very sad commentary on the state of our nation if Obama is not elected. But I believe that the Obama/Biden ticket *will* be elected.

Senator Obama is an impressive candidate and he has the money to compete. The more voters hear him, the more they will rally to his message.

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And as I write at the end of September, he is starting to build a lead. Also, attitudes in our country are changing and young Americans—free of old prejudices—are registering in record numbers and tending to back Obama.

Working families, whatever lingering prejudices may exist, are worried about their jobs, their healthcare, their retirement and the future of their families.

They are going to vote for the candidate who promises real hope and a break from Bush, not the one who claims that the Bush economy is fundamentally sound, who wants to tax the health insurance benefits of workers, and who is pretending that he has not been a big part of the problem in Washington.

# Housekeepers Assert Their Rights

## NCFO/SWU Organizing Rolls On

Even with card-check recognition of their union, sometimes workers have to stand up and fight for their rights. That's exactly what housekeepers at Blue Grass Oakwood State Hospital in Somerset, Kentucky did.

Their supervisor pressed employees not to sign union cards, showed favoritism and harassed union activists. When employee Alice Perkins had an asthma attack at work and coworker Connie Saylor insisted on coming to her aid, three-day suspensions were threatened.

Joined by Daphne Acton, they mustered up their courage and set off to see higher management, their supervisor following closely behind, telling them they were fired.

They weren't. And, the workers have a new contract which includes substantial improvements in sick leave and paid vacation, lower employee contributions to health insurance, a defined contribution pension plan, a pay hike and the protection of a grievance procedure.

"We learned a lot about what we can do when we stand up together," says Acton. "We are no longer afraid."

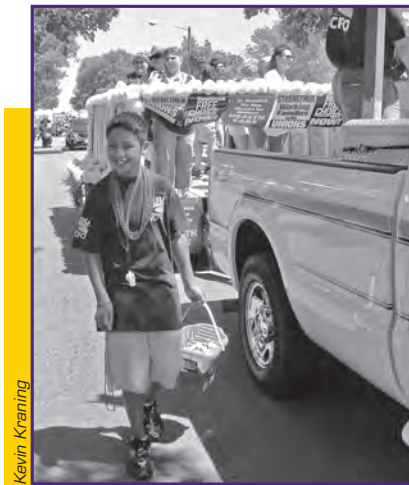
Somerset is one of six Kentucky and Ohio locations where NCFO organizers have helped employees of contractors



Housekeepers (from left) Daphne Acton, Connie Saylor and Alice Perkins stood up to an anti-union supervisor and helped establish their new union, one of six units of SWU organized in Kentucky and Ohio by NCFO.

become members of Service Workers United (SWU) and get strong NCFO representation to boot. Food service workers at Summit Behavioral Health

in Cincinnati and Western State Hospital in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, and housekeepers at Eastern State Hospital in Lexington and the Hazelwood Nursing Facility and Central State Hospital in Louisville have all successfully organized with NCFO help.



Kevin Kraining

## NCFO Float Carries Union Message in Parade

For the second year in a row, Chapter 403 had the only union presence among the 160 floats in the annual Nebraskaland Days Parade in North Platte, enjoyed by more than 45,000 spectators. Both NCFO and local SWU members participated, displaying and distributing information on the Employee Free Choice Act and health care reform. Candy was also given out by volunteers like Niki Valez (shown right), nephew of Chapter 403 President Howard Mendonca.

### NCFO PROCEDURE REGARDING DUES AND FEE OBJECTORS

The following procedure shall apply for maintenance of union membership and dues obligations under the union security agreements between the NCFO District and the employers for whom their members work, in order to comply with interpretations of the U.S. Constitution, the National Labor Relations Act, and the Railway Labor Act by the United States Supreme Court:

1. Any employee whom an NCFO affiliate represents who is required to be a member of the union under a union shop agreement, but who objects to joining or remaining a member of the union, will be deemed to have met the requirements of the union shop agreement if the employee pays to the union an amount equal to the periodic dues, fees and assessments (not including fines and penalties) uniformly required of all members of the union ("the agency fee") within the time limits provided for in the union shop agreement. Such employee shall be known as an "agency fee payer." (Agency fee payers are not union members; they may not vote in union elections or be candidates for union office, attend union meetings, serve as delegates to union conventions or participate in the delegate selection process, or vote on the ratification of collective bargaining agreements.)
2. Any employee subject to a union shop agreement who is not a member of the NCFO has the legal right, through timely written objection, to limit his/her agency fee payment to expenditures that are necessarily or reasonably undertaken by the union to represent employees for whom it is the exclusive representative, i.e. activities of the union that are related to collective bargaining, contract administration and grievance handling. In such case, expenses unrelated to these activities, will be excluded from the agency fee calculation. Such "non-chargeable expenditures" include contributions of money or paid union staff time to political parties, candidates, and charities and other organizations; expenses to recruit new members; legislative lobbying expenses not directly related to collective bargaining agreement negotiation or administration, including time of union officers and employees; affiliated organization dues; costs of portions of the union's newsletter and magazine publications not related to the employment interests of the employee; members-only benefit expenses; and expenses for litigation that does not directly concern the objector; his bargaining unit, or the union as an institution.
3. An employee who wants to submit such an objection must do so initially within 30 days after he/she first becomes covered by the union shop agreement or resigns from the union and receives notice of this procedure and thereafter annually in writing to the NCFO Secretary-Treasurer postmarked during the month of November each year. The objection must include the employee's

- name, home address, social security number, employer, job title, work location, and home and work phone numbers. The agency fees of new employees who file such objections shall be reduced retroactively to the date he/she first begins paying an agency fee; the agency fees of all other employees who file such objections shall be reduced for the twelve-month period beginning January 1 next after the objection is received and ending December 31 of that year. Prior to the beginning of this twelve month period, each employee who has filed an objection will be provided with a full explanation of the basis for the reduced fee, and an explanation of the procedure for challenging the calculation of that reduced fee.
4. The union shall maintain records of the amount of time, dues/assessment/fee income, and assets that are expended for chargeable and non-chargeable activities. Such records shall be subject annually to an independent audit in order to determine the amount of reduced fee to be charged agency fee objectors.
5. An employee may challenge the union's calculation of the reduced fee via arbitration before an impartial arbitrator in accordance with the Rules for Impartial Determination of Union Fees of the American Arbitration Association. In such arbitration, the union bears the burden of proving the propriety of its calculation. To invoke arbitration, the employee must submit his/her challenge in writing to the NCFO Secretary-Treasurer postmarked within 30 days of his receipt of the fee explanation. Pending resolution of the challenge, the union shall place in an interest-bearing escrow account a sufficient portion of the fees being paid by those employees who have filed challenges to ensure that the portion of the fee reasonably in dispute will not be expended. After the issuance of the arbitrator's ruling, the union shall promptly distribute the escrowed monies in accordance with the ruling and, if required by the ruling, adjust the amount of the reduced fee.
6. This procedure shall be administered in a manner that is completely fair to agency fee payers who register objections. The NCFO Secretary-Treasurer is authorized to determine the amount of the reduced fee each year and to provide proper notice of this procedure to agency fee payers.
7. This procedure shall be published by the union in its newsletter or magazine, and sent to each agency fee payer, annually. It shall also be provided to each new employee when he/she first becomes subject to a union shop agreement.

# Training Meetings Strengthen Representation for Railroad Mem



## Similar Seminars Planned for Leaders of Other NCFO Chapters

**S**ome 50 leaders of NCFO railroad chapters came recently to the National Labor College in the Washington suburbs for intensive training to help improve representation for rail members and build the NCFO political fundraising program.

Similar comprehensive representation training conferences are being

scheduled for local officers and stewards of all non-rail NCFO chapters, to be held in upstate New York, Kentucky and Minnesota.

These Progress Meetings—which are to be a regular fixture in the newly restructured NCFO—also included a number of educational speakers and reports from President George Francisco and Secretary-Treasurer

John Thacker, who led the training in political fundraising.

In his opening remarks, Francisco explained that the rail Progress Meetings were the beginning of the union's preparation for national rail contract bargaining next year. "The better we are at defending the contract, the stronger we will be in bargaining," he said.



*"The **better** we are at  
**defending** the contract,  
the **stronger** we will be  
in **bargaining**."*

— President George Francisco

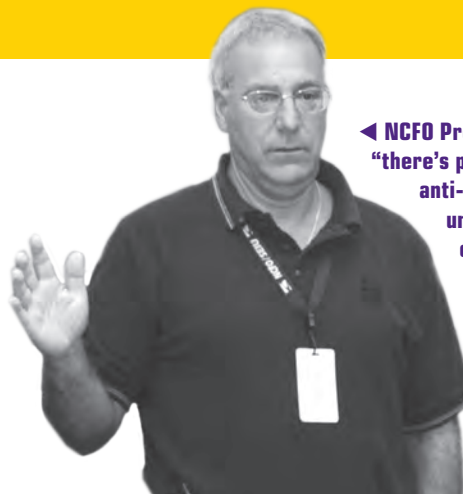
Presidents of NCFO railroad chapters are all smiles after completing intensive training at the National Labor College in the suburbs of Washington, DC. "Things keep changing and it's good to keep up and learn new approaches," says Bill Bormann, long-time leader of Corbin Kentucky Chapter 362. "It was great to learn from making mistakes in the mock hearing so that we won't make them at real hearings," adds the less experienced president of Montana Chapter 911, Dacen Kuntz.



# Members



◀ **NCFO Secretary-Treasurer John Thacker (right) plays the role of a reluctant member as North Carolina Chapter 576 President R. David Connor urges him to sign up to contribute to the Firemen and Oilers Political League. "When our leaders truly believe that they are helping members by asking them to contribute, members will respond," Thacker says.**



◀ **NCFO President George Francisco warns that "there's probably no politician who is more anti-Amtrak, anti-railroad and anti-union than (Republican Presidential candidate) John McCain. He tried nine times in one year to destroy Amtrak, voted to gut bargaining rights for railroad and transit workers, and says that NAFTA has been great for America," says Francisco.**

He also stressed the importance of pressure from members in order to achieve strong unity among the 12 railroad unions in bargaining, and cited one more factor as even more important.

"There's probably no politician who is more anti-Amtrak, anti-railroad and anti-union than John McCain. Electing Barack Obama as the next president of the United States is crucial to us and to every working family."

Much of the flavor of the training is captured in the photos on these pages.



▶ **Barstow California Chapter 1186 President Bernard Palmer (left) practices asking members to contribute to the Firemen & Oilers Political League with Homewood Illinois Chapter 944 President Anthony Washington. "I know I can be successful in getting the members of my chapter involved," Washington says. ▶**

◀ **During the mock hearings, participants were given a case to argue and had to play various roles, from a member facing discipline and NCFO representative, to hearing officer and company witness.**



▼ **Alliance Nebraska Chapter 861 President Julie Fitzsimmons makes a point during a mock hearing. "It was great to see how others handle situations," she says. "Now, I feel more confident about raising objections at hearings."**



◀ **Rail General Chairman Jim Larreau leads one of the representation seminars he planned and presented. "I learned more on how to better represent my members than I could have in any other way," explains North Platte Nebraska Chapter 403 President Howard Mendonca.**



▲ **New Harrisburg Pennsylvania Chapter 1215 President Marlin Hudson makes a point during a discussion while new chapter Presidents James Kenny of New Jersey Chapter 338 (left) and Paul Silvia of Birmingham Alabama Chapter 514, listen. Says Silvia of the training: "I'm prepared to take on a hearing I have coming up. As my grandfather always told me, 'pick the brains of the elders.'"**

# Barack Obama v. John McCain



**Barack Obama**

**John McCain**

**TRADE**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Strongly opposes tax breaks for corporations sending jobs overseas</li> <li>■ Will renegotiate NAFTA to add labor and environmental standards</li> <li>■ Voted against Central America Free Trade Agreement</li> <li>■ Opposes free trade deal with Colombia</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Says free trade “is the best thing that can happen to our nation”</li> <li>■ Proposes expanding NAFTA to the entire hemisphere</li> <li>■ Voted for every bad trade deal, to give Bush fast-track authority and to admit China into the WTO</li> <li>■ Pushed a defense contract that cost 44,000 U.S. jobs</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

**AMTRAK**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Voted many times for long-term federal investment in Amtrak</li> <li>■ Opposes privatization of Amtrak jobs</li> <li>■ Voted for expanded commuter rail in Illinois</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Supported Bush’s efforts to destroy and privatize Amtrak</li> <li>■ Calls Amtrak funding “the great train robbery”</li> <li>■ Tried to privatize Amtrak nine times in one year, endangering 25,000 jobs</li> </ul> |
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**THE ECONOMY, JOBS AND TAXES**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Proposes creating five million jobs through investment in renewable energy</li> <li>■ Supports expanded economic stimulus package for working families—including an additional 26 weeks benefits for all unemployed</li> <li>■ Seeks to cut taxes for 95 percent of Americans</li> <li>■ Calls for ending Bush tax giveaways to the rich and big corporations</li> <li>■ Opposes taxing your health insurance benefits</li> <li>■ Supports curtailing Big Oil’s windfall profits to fund rebates to working families</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Repeatedly praised the Bush economic record, saying (this year) that “there has been great economic progress” since Bush took office</li> <li>■ Calls for corporate tax cuts even larger than Bush’s</li> <li>■ Proposes taxing your health insurance benefits</li> <li>■ Opposed curtailing Big Oil’s windfall profits to fund rebates to working families</li> <li>■ Voted against legislation to crack down on predatory home mortgage lenders</li> <li>■ Has backed Bush in opposing expanded unemployment benefits</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

# Who Will be Best for NCFO Working Families?

Barack Obama	John McCain
<b>SOCIAL SECURITY</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Opposes privatization of Social Security and the ending of guaranteed benefits</li> <li>■ Opposes raising the retirement age</li> <li>■ Wants the rich to pay Social Security taxes on all their income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Backed Bush's plan to privatize Social Security</li> <li>■ Supports diverting Social Security payroll taxes into stock-market accounts</li> <li>■ Is "considering" raising the retirement age and cutting cost-of-living adjustments</li> </ul>
<b>LABOR RIGHTS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Strongly supports the Employee Free Choice Act to restore the right to organize</li> <li>■ Will not appoint anti-union zealots to the National Mediation Board, the NLRB and other agencies and the Federal courts, ending Bush's war on labor rights</li> <li>■ Opposed Bush's efforts to strip the right to overtime pay from millions of workers</li> <li>■ Voted to protect rail and transit workers' bargaining rights</li> <li>■ Supports stronger enforcement and expansion of OSHA protections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Opposes the Employee Free Choice Act</li> <li>■ Supports allowing the permanent replacement of striking workers</li> <li>■ Voted to gut protection of rail and transit workers' bargaining rights</li> <li>■ Voted for a national right-to-work law to weaken unions</li> <li>■ Praises Bush's judicial appointments and will make anti-union appointments</li> <li>■ Called the right to unionize "class warfare"</li> </ul>
<b>HEALTHCARE</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Proposes healthcare for all Americans—as good as provided to Members of Congress—to be funded by ending the Bush tax giveaways to those making over \$250,000 per year</li> <li>■ Voted to allow import of cheaper prescription drugs from Canada</li> <li>■ Opposed Bush Medicare cuts and will negotiate cheaper drug prices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Is pushing a healthcare plan similar to Bush's that would help undermine employment-based insurance and weaken benefits</li> <li>■ Voted to cut billions from Medicare and raise the eligibility age</li> <li>■ Voted against expanding healthcare coverage for millions of children</li> </ul>
<b>VETERANS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Voted repeatedly to increase funding for healthcare, mental health services and VA hospitals in 2005, 2006 and 2007</li> <li>■ Voted to spend \$19 billion for military and veterans hospitals in 2006</li> <li>■ Backs 21st Century Bill to help veterans afford college</li> <li>■ Proposes letting all veterans who need it get healthcare through the VA</li> <li>■ Introduced the Veterans Homelessness Prevention Act</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Opposed the 21st Century GI Bill as "too generous"</li> <li>■ Repeatedly voted against raising funds for veterans health benefits</li> <li>■ Repeatedly voted slash funding for the VA</li> <li>■ Opposed \$500 million in funding for counseling services for veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder and other problems</li> <li>■ Voted with disabled vets advocates less than 25 percent of the time in 2004, 2005 and 2006</li> </ul>

# Too Young to Fight for Your Future?

**Wyatt Lund** of Local 276 isn't.

He's 25, single and not affiliated with a political party.

And, he's **worried about jobs** like his—  
with good pay and benefits—continuing to disappear.

**"I vote my job**—which means for **Barack Obama** this year—but I now realize that **voting isn't enough.**"

That's why Lund has started **contributing** each month to the **Firemen & Oilers Political League (F&OPL)**.

He wants his union to have the **financial clout** to help elect candidates who will **stand up** for working people like him, and you.

And hold them accountable, too.

"I want to make a difference. **Together we can.**"

Contact your chapter to find out how you can sign up and join the fight.



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