

The First Shot in the 2004 Campaign Kentucky Political Effort Yields Delayed Payoff Chandler Elected to Vacated Seat in Congress

In the first election for federal office in 2004, Democrat Ben Chandler parlayed the recent major efforts by NCFO/SEIU and other unions on his behalf into decisive victory in a previously Republican-held Congressional district in Kentucky.

He became the first Democrat in 13 years to win a Republican-held seat in a special election, defeating an opponent running primarily as a supporter of President Bush, who made a commercial for her campaign.

Chandler won the seat previously held by Ernie Fletcher, who defeated him for governor last November, largely because of scandals engulfing



Ben Chandler (right), the first Democrat to win an open Republican-held Congressional seat in 13 years, thanks NCFO Organizing Director John Thacker and Kentucky staffer Melinda Kimmel for the union's support.

the outgoing Democratic governor.

In that 2003 election, Chandler carried those districts where 250 NCFO and other SEIU volunteers staffed telephone banks, leafleted at worksites and knocked on doors. [see Winter 2004 *Journal*]. The lasting effects of that outreach effort helped spell victory in the Congressional race, just three months later.

"It felt really good to know that we can make a big difference when we really get involved," says New Yorker Jim Farrigan of Local 933, one of the many out-of-state NCFO volunteers who flocked to Kentucky last fall. "The payoff was delayed a few months, but now we have a

friend in Congress who we can expect to stand up for us the way we stood up for him."

The impact of Chandler's victory also was felt in Washington. As one political consultant quoted by the *Associated Press* put it: the Republican candidate "hooked her fortunes to George Bush and his fortunes took a nose dive. This is the opening shot of the November elections."

35th Convention Set for Atlantic City in September

The 35th NCFO Convention will take place September 13-15 in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The venue will be the Trump Taj Mahal at Boardwalk & Virginia Avenue.

Delegates sent by their local unions will chart the course of the Conference for the next four years, with considerable attention focused on ways to strengthen the union through organizing and political action.

Contact your local union for more information.

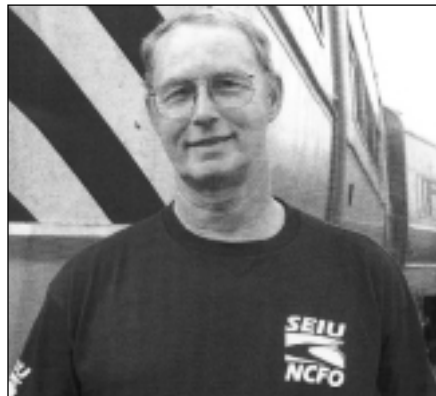
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Ask President Francisco

Q I work for Metro North commuter rail. An association representing some employees here has a new contract under which new hires pay a lot for health insurance and current employees don't pay anything. What do you think about deals like this?

*William Chilson, Local 520
Harmon, New York*



A Before directly responding to your question, let me say a couple of things that put my answer in a context.

The first is that the cost of health coverage is the most difficult issue in contract negotiations for every union in America these days. Out-of-sight cost increases are a central issue in virtually every labor dispute and realistically no longer can be handled at the bargaining table. It's quite different, by the way, for our union brothers and sisters to the north in Canada because they have a national health care system covering everyone. We need that, too.

We've successfully fought off any employee contributions towards health coverage in the national rail agreement, and keeping it fully employer-paid has eaten up potential raises for more than a decade. We've gone through several years of determined bargaining with our members working without a new contract. Now that a number of other railroad unions signed agreements including employee contributions to health insurance, our members may have to start contributing, too—though a lot less than the railroads were demanding.

Thus, I understand the difficulties and that (and this gets to my second point) every bargaining situation is

unique. I'm quite reluctant to inject myself into the internal affairs of another union or to pass judgment on negotiators trying to do their best for their members.

But having said all of this, it is my opinion that agreements that divide current and future union members from each other—the way the one you described does—are a very bad idea. There almost always are alternative approaches that can be taken.

Unions in general—and NCFO in particular—are based on the pillars of unity and solidarity. I grew up in a union household and have always believed that our labor movement has a third pillar that holds it up: a commitment to making the future better for our own children and those who follow behind us on the job.

I believe that this commitment is a sacred trust.

If our parents and grandparents had taken the narrow attitude of thinking just about themselves, our contracts might be in tatters by now. In any case, when new hires learn that they are second-class citizens as far as the union is concerned, it cannot help but weaken their commitment to the union and to divide the membership. A downward spiral that's hard to stop is set in motion.

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On the other hand, when union members share both the gain—and the pain—together, they are much more likely to stay united and strong for future battles.

I'm determined to make our union—and the labor movement—stronger again for our children and grandchildren. Secretary-Treasurer Dan Anderson and the Conference Executive Board agree. That's why we've begun dramatic new programs—which you should be hearing about from your local union—to involve every member, greatly increase our political clout and war chest, and direct resources into expanding our bargaining power through organizing.

That's the only way the legacy we leave can be a stronger union, a brighter future and a fairer America.

It's not over 'til it's Overtime

PART I

Over 1.5 million Americans signed petitions or wrote protest letters and 75,000 filed detailed comments with the Department of Labor against Bush efforts to rob eight million Americans of overtime pay protections. Both houses of Congress opposed the rip-off and lawmakers like Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) kept up the fight against it. The Bush Administration then had to scale back its assault on overtime.

But the final changes—all 600 pages of them—which were released with great fanfare and media hype, still threaten the overtime pay and workday limits for millions of American workers and contain brand new attacks not in the draft. And Harkin vowed to keep trying to block funding for implementation.

It is important to note that the final rules—which go into effect on August 20—do not apply to you and other union members covered by contracts requiring overtime or premium weekend pay. But they send a signal to employers that it's open season on overtime provisions during future negotiations.

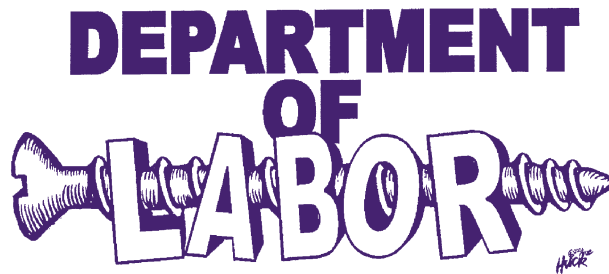
Hiding the Truth

When Labor Secretary Elaine Chao announced the proposed changes in March 2003, she insisted that the goal was to update job categories, strengthen overtime protection and give it to more workers. She claimed that 1.3 million lower-income workers would gain overtime protection and only 644,000 higher-paid workers would lose it.

It was only after labor economists at the Economic Policy Institute examined all of the details hidden in the fine print and carefully analyzed the impact, did it become clear that *eight million working people were at risk* and

how truly dishonest the folks running things in Washington now are.

Their ultimate goal—which we will discuss in Part II of this series—is to do



away with overtime pay completely. For now, they just give with one hand and take away with the other.

Give, then Take

It is by raising the income level below which a worker is automatically eligible for overtime pay up to \$22,100 per year (\$23,600 in the final rules) that the extra workers supposedly get included. *But right there in the rules were suggestions for employers on how to avoid paying overtime to these very workers:* just convert them from hourly wages to salary, bump the salary a bit and work them lots of extra hours at no extra pay, let alone time-and-a-half for over an eight-hour day or 40-hour week.

This handy employer guide on how to subvert the rules is no longer included (though it's still noted that employers could make such changes). But, this outrageous wink to employers was widely publicized and not likely to be ignored by employers eager for greater profits at the expense of employees.

The final regulations remove an outrageous provision that explicitly allowed employers to *use training received by workers while serving their country in the military as an excuse to strip them of overtime pay.*

But it still says that you can be considered a “learned professional”—and ineligible for overtime pay—as long as you have substantially the same knowledge level as employees with degrees, based on work experience and other training. So, veterans are not necessarily protected, just no longer singled out.

When Labor Secretary Elaine Chao was quizzed about the original provision at a Senate hearing she ducked the question, except to note that active duty soldiers don't get overtime pay.

New Attacks

The final regulations have new, insidious attacks on overtime, which, of course, were not mentioned to the media:

- As many as two million “team leaders” in a broad cross section of industries could become ineligible for overtime.
- The entire financial services industry—except for low-level clericals—is written out of overtime protections. This could strip millions more from protections.

Another negative change remains in the final rules, one that will help with the *Walmartization* of America.

Now, low-level supervisors—like of a small department at a Walmart—who do more or less the same work as the employees they supervise and have no power to hire or fire even the two employees they supervise, now are ineligible for federal overtime protections.

In the next issue we'll look at how overtime pay, the eight-hour day and the 40-hour week came to be part of Federal law, how these protections were expanded, and how the Bush Administration plans to do away with them completely.

Action

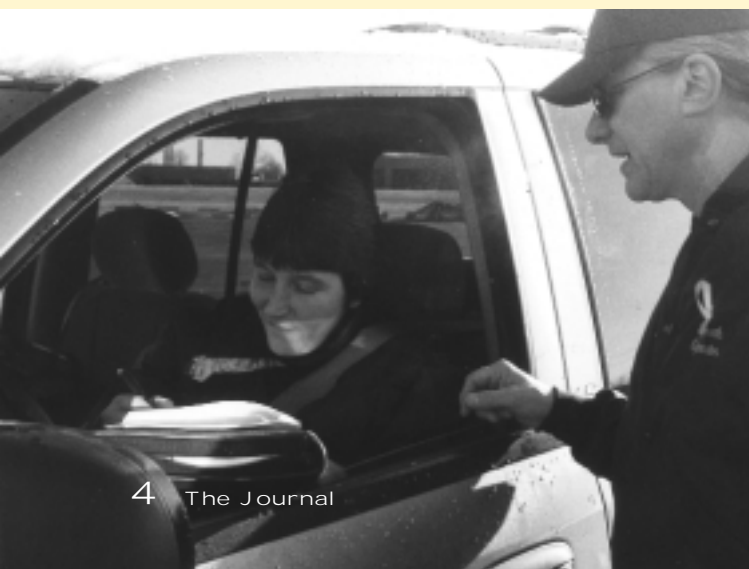
Not Hot Air, from Erie

Fight for the Future

Campaign Heats Up



▲ Beginning the effort to make sure every member is registered to vote, Local 22 President Matt Husted (right) and Vice President Jim Longley go over a computer-generated registration list with Rosann Barker of the Erie AFL-CIO Council. "I've been registering lots of new voters," says Husted. "I even got my ex-wife to register."



◀ Member Peggy Schuster, with a helping hand from Vice President Jim Longley, registers to vote. "Nobody ever talked to me about this before and I never registered," she says. "But I'm worried about what's going on in the country."

Here in this once vibrant industrial city in the far northwest corner of Pennsylvania, no NCFO member could recall ever being approached by their local to register to vote, to volunteer to help elect pro-worker candidates, to give their opinion on issues, or to contribute to the union's political action fund—the Firemen & Oilers Political League (F&OPL).

That is, not until early this year, when a letter arrived from NCFO's top officers in Washington.

"It was an urgent call to political battle and a warning that another Bush Administration would just about do us in," says Local 22 Financial Secretary Kevin Dylewski, who, like the other local leaders, just came into office in January. "It was all new to us, but we welcomed the call to action. We knew we had to step up and get serious about involving members, raising money and doing our share."

New President Matt Husted—who admits to having ignored politics most of his life and to making "one of the biggest mistakes in my life by voting for Bush in 2000"—invited NCFO Secretary-Treasurer and Political Director Dan Anderson to address a membership meeting.

Even before Anderson fired up the membership and explained the specifics of the union's *Fight for the Future* Political Plan, Husted and other union activists were growing frustrated and angry about the impact of the current administration—and the corporate greed it is fueling—on Erie's

Erie Gas Workers: Are Fast

working families. The meeting lit a fuse that's exploded into major changes.

"In the past our entire focus was on grievances, but now we want to make sure there are good jobs for our kids. I'm excited about the difference I can make with my vote and by involving others," continues Husted. "I've been registering lots of new voters. I even got my ex-wife to register," he adds.

"That night we all realized that things would never be the same for our local," recalls Vice President Jim Longley, who is coordinating political efforts. "I didn't pay much attention to politics until three years ago when I started taking union classes offered through the central labor council and saw the big picture," Longley explains.

"Bush and the big corporations want to undo all the gains made by working people in the 20th century. They want to take us back to the days of the Robber Barons like Rockefeller," adds Longley. "If they have their way, jobs will start coming back here when the U.S. becomes a Third World country with low wages and no unions."

Local 22's efforts to help make sure that doesn't happen, initially focused—as does our story—on the 80 members working for National Fuel Gas in the Erie area. As we went to press, outreach was beginning to involve the 60 members working for the company in other locations (as far away as Jamestown, New York) and among the 65 public employee members in Pennsylvania's Warren County.



▲ Gathering after first shift ended, members fill out a survey on the issues that concern them and the ways they'd like to participate. "I've been a member for 30 years and this is the first time the union has asked for my opinions," notes Bill Peters. Some 45 members have completed the surveys and 24 volunteered to help with the local's internal mobilization, phone banking and other activities.



▲ "We've had our heads in the sand for far too long," says 22-year member and former vice president Paul Witosky. "Abortion and guns are big concerns to me, but I vote my job," adds Witosky, who is one of 25 members in Erie who signed up for checkoff to the union's political action fund this year for the first time. The checkoff total so far this year: \$105 per month. Last year the local raised a total of zero through checkoff.

▶ "I voted for Bush in 2000 because Gore was against snowmobiling and things like that, but I'm sorry about my vote for a number of reasons," says Pat McGuire.

The top reason: "It was wrong to send our kids over there to Iraq. I was lied to. He should have had proof."

Among those to Iraq was the 23-year-old son of Jim Longley, who enlisted McGuire to contribute to F&OPL.



▲ 34-year member Bill Triana, a registered Republican who voted for Bush in 2000, is a decorated Vietnam veteran who has had enough of the Bush corporate agenda. "We're losing millions of jobs while he gives tax breaks to the rich. I don't mind tax breaks to companies that actually create jobs. But just adding to profits doesn't help us," he argues.



Show Us The JOBS

Bus Tour Dramatized Job Crisis Maine NCFO Member Tells His Story to America

EACH OF THE 51 AMERICAN WORKERS—one from each state and the District of Columbia—has a different story about how the job crisis has impacted them and their families.

They told these stories during an eight-day, 18-city bus tour in March to rally Americans about the jobless recovery and dramatize the urgent need for government to help struggling working families and help create jobs.

They varied widely in age, background, political affiliation and job history. About half were union members.

They included a young lawyer who had to take a job making sandwiches, a 40-year crane operator training for a job with half the pay, a teenager stuck in low-wage jobs who has had to defer his dream of going to college, a laid-off highway worker about to lose her house, a skilled machinist who has had two jobs sent to other countries, a computer professional axed after she went to India to train workers who wound up with her job, and a nurse victimized by downsizing now struggling to pay for health care.

At rallies, town meetings, colleges, churches and worksites, they told their stories and listened to those of others.

"I'll never forget the two single mothers we met in Iowa," recalls Local 3 member Kevin Gregory, a laid-off paper mill worker who represented Maine on the tour [see sidebar]. "One of them couldn't even afford diapers for her baby."

Gregory and the other hard-pressed bus riders took up a collection for the two young women, raising \$428 for each of them out of their own near-empty pockets.

"My family is having a rough time but I met so many people who are much worse off than we are and I saw first-hand that the crisis isn't just in Maine—which has lost the highest percentage of its manufacturing jobs of any state—but all over," says Gregory. "Imagine 11,000 housing foreclosures just in Youngstown,

Ohio, in only three years."

Gregory initially was reluctant to join the *Show Us the Jobs* tour because of having to face the media. "I decided I had to tell my story and I knew that once I got worked up, I'd be able to do it. "I feel stronger now and I know that people are going to unite."

The Story of One Worker on the Tour: Local 3 Member Kevin Gregory of Maine

Family man, third-generation mill worker, avid hunter and fisherman and dedicated NCFO member and local leader, Kevin Gregory enjoyed his modest version of the American Dream in Millinocket, Maine, where he's lived his entire life.

But now he's been without work since January 11, 2003, when the Great Northern Paper mill closed, robbing 1,200 families of paychecks.

Gregory was part of the union committee that helped negotiate the sale of the bankrupt mill to another company, which has reopened it with half the workers. And they're earning \$6 per hour less than before. He didn't make the seniority cut.

He's using re-training assistance

to study business management. "But everyone who lost their job is studying the same thing and there aren't jobs," he says. "Even my friends with engineering degrees cannot find jobs."

He's still receiving unemployment benefits and health coverage because he's in a retraining program. But there's no coverage for his wife or nine-year-old son.

It's even worse for his parents, who were "guaranteed" prescription drug coverage for the rest of their lives when

his father retired from the mill. But the promise was broken for him and 670 other retirees. "My mother is very sick and they've had to pay \$5,000 for prescription drugs they should not have had to pay," he says bitterly.

Gregory has had to empty his 401(k)



NCFO Local 3 member Kevin Gregory speaks to the media at the Bangor airport before flying to St. Louis to represent Maine on the *Show Us the Jobs* Tour, which visited 18 cities in eight days to dramatize the job crisis in America. He has been unemployed since January, 2003.

—and as a result ironically wound up paying more in income taxes last year than any year when he was working.

Upon arriving in Washington at the end of the bus tour, Gregory told a Congressional briefing about what's been hardest of all for him.

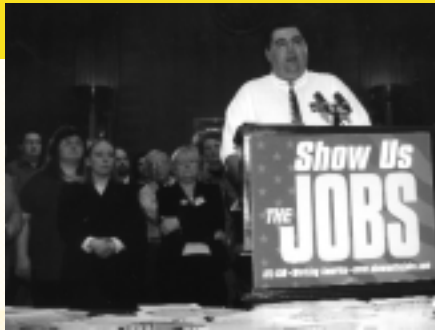
"I was always told to work hard and pay my bills. That's why it was so hard to ask for help. It took me about two months to get up the nerve to go to a food bank. Even now when I go, I don't feel right doing it."

That pantry, Gregory adds, served just 50 families two years ago. Now it helps 1,800 families.

Gregory shudders at the memory of almost voting for George Bush in 2000 because of gun-rights issues. He slams Bush for not "doing things to take care of the people of the United States. I read recently that average income in Maine was down \$1,000 last year while corporate profits were up 25 percent. Something is wrong."

Of his experience spending eight days on the *Show Us the Jobs* Tour, Gregory had this to say, with Senate and House leaders listening and more than a dozen TV cameras rolling:

"I consider myself a big tough guy, but



Speaking at the briefing held in a Senate hearing room, Gregory tells of having to swallow his pride and seek help at a food bank and about the hard times he saw everywhere on the tour. "I consider myself a big tough guy, but I had tears in my eyes the whole trip," he said. Seated behind him are other tour participants. On the table in front are some of the thousands of messages to President Bush they collected as they toured.

I had tears in my eyes the whole trip. When they talk about kids, it really hits home. I have a little boy and I used to spoil him rotten. But now I have to say no. And it's tough to hear that other parents are telling their children that they can't go to college or even afford to attend their junior prom.

"I'd like to see America remember its workers. Please remember that across America, hardworking Americans want to work and provide for their families—and too many of them cannot."



Gregory (center) and NCFD Secretary-Treasurer Dan Anderson (left) picket—with hundreds of others—a Bush reelection fundraiser at a Washington hotel on the final day of the tour. The protest blasted Bush's attack on overtime pay, as well as his record on jobs [see boxes].



Kevin Gregory (center) is flanked by House of Representatives Democratic Caucus Chair Robert Menendez (left) and U.S. Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle as they listen to another worker from the bus tour. "You can't be a beacon of light to the world when your bulb is shut down at home," Menendez said of the Bush economic program.

Bush's Dismal Record on Jobs

- America has lost 2.8 million manufacturing jobs since Bush took office, more than in the preceding 22 years combined.
- Bush promised that his 2003 tax cuts for the rich would create 5.5 million jobs between July 2003 and the end of 2004. By the end of March 2004 (the first month of good job growth) the shortfall was 2,065,000.
- Roughly 690,000 U.S. jobs have moved abroad since Bush came into office.
- In each of the previous 11 recessions, there were more jobs three years after the recession began than when it started. Not this time. Bush has the worst record in creating jobs since Herbert Hoover in the Great Depression.
- In 2003 average wages went up less than 2 percent, the worst since 1987. Corporate profits rose 25 percent.
- Some 14.7 million Americans are jobless, unemployed or have given up looking for work.
- Personal savings are at record lows. Personal bankruptcies are at record highs.

Bush Jobs Program: Help the Rich

- Give \$2 trillion in tax cuts to the rich.
- Refuse to extend benefits to the long-term unemployed.
- Reclassify jobs flipping hamburgers in fast-food restaurants as manufacturing jobs—something actually proposed in the Economic Report of the President.
- Push regulations—opposed by both houses of Congress—to strip 8 million Americans of overtime pay, with an eye towards ending it for everyone.
- Propose as "job creation czar" a Nebraska industrialist who cuts jobs at home and opened a plant in China.
- Encourage the "outsourcing" of jobs to other countries. The chair of Bush's Council of Economic Advisors had to apologize for saying it was good for the economy. But on March 30, Treasury Secretary John Snow came right back and claimed, as the *Cincinnati Enquirer* reported, "that moving jobs overseas can help the flagging economy."
- Try to stop publication of a monthly government report on large layoffs.

Have You Helped a Billionaire Today?



President Bush finds time in his busy schedule to do something to help the super rich just about every day.

In fact, he spends most of his time helping them, so they'll pour money into his reelection campaign.

But both Bush and the Billionaires need your help.



After all, there's so few of them and so many of us.

Luckily, you don't have to be rich to join Billionaires for Bush.

For more information on what the President has done to help needy billionaires and what more needs to be done to support them, go to

www.billionairesforbush.com

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