

stories of millions of working men and women who want a stronger voice in our workplace. Their stories are about improving lives and building better communities. They are stories that need to be told across this country. All of us need to hear the challenges workers face when they choose to organize.

When the American public learns about the tactics that employers use, threats of losing their job, verbal and sexual harassment and mandatory antiunion meetings, they overwhelmingly, overwhelmingly support the freedom to choose a voice at work. That is why the AFL-CIO has launched the "Seven Days In June," a week-long series of community forums and rallies and demonstrations all across this country.

From the June 19 to June 25, we will hear more and more of these stories. There will be more than 120 activities in 36 States, activities which started last Saturday with our colleague, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SANCHEZ) holding a community forum in Orange County, California.

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Bringing dignity to the workplace is not easy, but it can and is being done. In fact, on the 27th of February of this year, 75,000 home care workers in Los Angeles won the largest organizing victory in 60 years when they voted to join the Service Employees International Union. This was a tremendous victory, but it did not happen overnight. It was the culmination of 10 years of hard work, of building a broad-based coalition, of gaining the support of home care consumers and political leaders.

In the end, it was about bringing the community together, uniting families behind the notion that those who take care of our parents and our grandparents ought to have some basic worker rights: A decent wage, not \$5 an hour, \$6 an hour, \$7 an hour like they are making today; safe working conditions, and adequate benefits.

These kinds of victories are occurring more and more. The doctors in our country are starting to organize unions because of their frustration with the health care system that will not let them practice what they have learned and took so long to learn in their studies.

The graduate assistants teaching at universities and colleges all over the country are now organizing, with great victories recently occurring at the University of California.

Workers are holding and winning more union elections than in the previous year, winning 51 percent of the time in 1998. That figure is particularly remarkable when we look at the tactics that employers use to squelch organizing drives: Firing pro union employees, using intimidating and verbal harassment at the workplace, holding closed-door one-on-one shakedown sessions with workers, and spending millions on anti-union consultants.

With all these cards that are stacked against the workers, how do they win? First and foremost, it comes from deep down. It comes from a resolve and a commitment to be treated with dignity and with respect.

It also comes from raising awareness, from building coalitions with the religious community, the civic communities, with political leaders, and from building a stronger community in general.

For those of us who care deeply about working families and strengthening our community, we have a responsibility and indeed an obligation to lend our voices to workers who have chosen to organize. I know some who have joined the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PALLONE) and myself recently in sending a letter to A&P food-stores simply to allow strawberry workers the choice to organize. I thank Members for that.

For those who are unaware of the situation, the California strawberry industry is booming with the annual sales of \$650 million. Yet, workers stoop to pick the berries for at least 12 hours a day and earn only \$8,500 a season. Last spring the Wall Street Journal reported shocking sanitation conditions at these farms, where workers have insufficient drinking water, squalid restrooms, where workers have not been paid for overtime for 4 years, and where there is widespread sexual harassment against female employees.

To bring some semblance of dignity to their workplace, the strawberry workers simply want the ability to choose their own representation, but they have repeatedly faced attacks by the industry, including plowing under the fields, and flying in sham workers to vote in union elections, just to break the union. They would plow the fields under and import workers from other parts of the country, or other countries.

This is the exact type of situation that deserves the support from elected leaders, and there are many more situations just like that going on throughout this country.

So raising our voices and standing with the strawberry workers is one thing we can do to be helpful, but there are many more. During these 7 days in June, there are opportunities for all of us to participate in activities which will help our families have the freedom to choose a voice at work.

I invite all of my colleagues to stand together with workers, clergy, community leaders to highlight the hopes and dreams of families who are seeking to bring basic human compassion to their workplace, because when we do that, we not only build a better workplace for workers who are unionized, but for workers who are nonunionized. We set the floor, we set the standard for them. But beyond all of that, we build better communities.

I thank my colleagues who have come to speak on this and who have spoken. I ask my other colleagues to join us in these 7 days in June.

SEVEN DAYS IN JUNE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. MYRICK). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) is recognized during morning hour debates for 3 minutes.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Madam Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR) for organizing this discussion in support of Seven Days in June, June 7 to 25. This is a week celebrating union organizing victories, and recognizing the importance of giving workers the freedom to choose a voice at work.

I am a proud member of UNITE, the needle trades union. I am proud of the accomplishments the union movement has won. Unions brought us the 40-hour work week, workers compensation, overtime compensation, and the end of child labor in this country.

Union members on average earn 32 percent more than other workers. They are more likely to receive health insurance and pension benefits from their employers.

More importantly, they have provided an organized voice for workers who have used that voice to make improvements in productivity, workplace safety, and environmental conditions.

Today there is perhaps no greater evidence of the need for workers to organize than the health care industry. The power of the for-profit health care industry has led to unwise cost-cutting that threatens not only the health and financial security of health care workers, but the patients they serve.

Several years ago, two nurses in New Jersey raised concerns about the effect of drive-through deliveries on mothers and infants, moms and babies being sent home the same day of delivery. One nurse, a union member, was threatened with retaliation, but was protected by her union. The other, an unorganized worker, had no one to intervene on her behalf.

Since then, Congress has passed a prohibition on drive-through deliveries, but without protection against retaliation, how many health care workers will be willing to talk about dangerous conditions? We need to pass whistle-blower protections, but we also need to give health care workers the opportunity to join a union if they want to.

Health care workers all over the country are looking to unions to protect them when they report problems. They are looking to unions to ensure they have safe working conditions.

This week in Chicago the AMA, the American Medical Association, is meeting to talk about unionization so physicians can have a strong voice in negotiating with large HMOs that dictate the terms of patient care.

Yet, when workers want to form a union, they face tremendous obstructions. The decks are stacked against them. At the same time that the AMA was meeting in Chicago, respiratory therapists from Vencor Hospital held a

press conference with the help of the Chicago Federation of Labor.

The therapists, concerned about the impacts on patients' safety as a result of a planned 25 percent budget cut, expressed their desire to form a union. They have been confronted with a series of anti-union tactics by their employer. One nurse was fired because she spoke out in support of union representation.

Workers across the country, particularly in the health care area, are deciding that they need union representation to protect themselves, their families, and their patients. We should ensure that they have a fair opportunity to make that choice. It is as American as apple pie.

CELEBRATING FREEDOM OF WORKERS TO JOIN A UNION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized during morning hour debates for 3 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I come to the floor in celebration of the freedom of workers to join unions. Would that it were only a celebration for 7 days in June. Workers across the United States are crying out for their right to join unions. Is this America? It is a sad day when we have to draw attention to the importance of the freedom to organize in a society like ours.

One of those 7 days in June will be this Friday, the day in the District of Columbia where Members of the region will sit and hear testimony from union members in this region about the difficulties they have had in joining unions and forming unions in this region.

I know something about this area. I continue to be a tenured professor of law at Georgetown University Law Center. When I was full-time, one of the major courses that I taught was labor law, and I saw and read and studied the deterioration of workers' rights, of the right to strike.

I saw the contrasts between a period of great prosperity in American life when business understood that part of the symmetry of the workplace was the right to organize. We have come to a point instead where there is no longer talk about occasional union-busting, but workers meet wholesale resistance to the development of unions in the workplace whereby most employers, confronted with workers who want to join unions, develop strategies to keep unions from even getting a vote on whether workers want a union, in fact.

Show me a society where the right to organize is in danger, and I will show Members a society without full democracy.

What has our society come to? Wall Street is bursting at the seams. We have had surpluses for years on end. We have the best economy of the century, and we do not want workers to orga-

nize to get a fair share of that economy? We are sending people out off the welfare rolls, as well we should, and we do not want them to be organized so they can get a fair share, so they can in fact support their families as they leave welfare?

What have employers to fear? After all, unions have to win a vote the way we have to win a vote in order to come back to this House every 2 years. That is hard to do with today's demographics, where workers are by no means automatically oriented towards unions. Why, then, do half of the employers threaten to shut down if their workers organize? Why do they fire one in four workers who in fact organize?

Despite these extraordinary efforts, unions are now having remarkable success. They are winning half of their elections of 500 or more unions. Minority and female workers in particular fare much better when they are organized than when they are not.

THE MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Madam Speaker, this is an important year. As I look back over the last few years and the challenges that we have, and of course there have been big challenges, doing some things we were told we could not do, I remember when I was first elected in 1994 we came to Washington to change how Washington works. There was a group of us in the majority here, and all of us were committed to doing some things there were those who told us we could not do, balancing the budget, cutting taxes for the middle class, reforming our welfare system, taming the tax collectors. But by sticking together and being persistent, we accomplished those very great challenges.

We balanced the budget for the first time in 2 years, we cut taxes for the first time in 16 years. In fact, in Illinois, my home State, 3 million Illinois children now benefit from the \$500 per child tax credit. When we think about that, that is \$1.5 million that now stays in Illinois, rather than coming to Washington to be spent. I personally think that the folks back home can better spend their hard-earned dollars in Illinois than I can for them in Washington.

On welfare reform, the first real welfare reform in a generation is working so well that in my home State of Illinois we have now seen our welfare rolls cut in half.

When it comes to taming the tax collector, we enacted a very fundamental change with IRS reform. If Members have ever been audited or gone to court with IRS in the past, they treated one as guilty until proven innocent. But thanks to this Republican Congress, we now have the same rights in the IRS that we have in the courtroom; that is,

we are innocent until the IRS proves us guilty.

Now we have some big challenges before us again this year, some challenges that the folks particularly on this side of the aisle say cannot be done. Republicans want to strengthen our local schools and make them safer. We want to strengthen social security and Medicare. In fact, we want to lock away for the first time in 30 years 100 percent of the social security surplus, so it is used only for social security. We want to pay down the national debt. We also want to continue working to lower the tax burden on middle class working families.

I believe, Madam Speaker, this year as we work to lower the tax burden on the middle class that we should listen to those concerns that I hear in the union halls and the South Side of Chicago and the south suburbs, in the VFW and local coffee shops and grain elevators.

Not only do people feel their taxes are too high, but they feel the Tax Code is too complicated, it needs to be simplified, and that the Tax Code is really unfair. I believe the first place we should start as we work to make our Tax Code fairer and more simpler is to address the most unfair consequence of today's Tax Code. That is something that has been nicknamed today the marriage tax penalty.

Why it is so important that we address this, this particular important issue that affects working middle class families, is to ask a series of questions. That is, do Americans feel that it is fair, do Americans feel that it is right, that a married working couple with two incomes pays on average \$1,400 more in higher taxes just because they are married? Do Americans feel it is right, do Americans feel that it is fair, that 21 million married working couples, on average, pay \$1,400 more in higher taxes just because they are married?

It is just plain wrong that a married working couple pays \$1,400 more in higher taxes than an identical couple living together outside of marriage. That is wrong. The marriage tax penalty on average is \$1,400. Back home in the South suburbs and in the South side of Chicago that is one year's tuition at a junior college, a local community college. It is 3 months in day care. It is several months worth of car payments. It is real money to real people, and it is just wrong that under our Tax Code married working couples pay more just because they are married.

Let me give an example here of a south suburban couple on the south suburbs of Chicago. We have a machinist, who of course works at the Joliet Caterpillar Plant making that big equipment. He makes \$30,500 a year.

Under our current Tax Code, if he is single and files as a single taxpayer, after we subtract the standard deduction and exemption, if he makes \$30,500, he is in the 15 percent tax bracket. But if he meets and decides