

**OCTOBER 2013  
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## **SPECIAL REPORT ON THE AFL-CIO CONVENTION**

**The 12 million member AFL-CIO**, the nation's largest affiliation of unions, held its quadrennial convention in Los Angeles September 8-11. Some 4,000 delegates attended the event. Delegates debated labor's future directions, elected officers and acted on a number of resolutions. President Richard Trumka and Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler were reelected to new terms. Tefere Gebre, a 45-year-old Ethiopian political refugee who immigrated to the United States as a teenager, and the executive director of the Orange County, Calif.,

labor federation, was elected Executive Vice President to replace Arlene Holt Baker who retired. AFL-CIO convention delegates put new emphasis on organizing, building partnerships with community allies and other strategies to restore bargaining rights and make democracy work for working families.

**The AFL-CIO convention took** historic steps to rebuild its membership and mobilize workers across America. The convention adopted a resolution to promote "new forms" of membership for students and nonunion workers. A key element of the initiative is to promote nonunion membership with Working America, the AFL-CIO's community affiliate designed

to provide services. "Working America ... is the fastest-growing organization for working people who don't have a union on the job," said the AFL-CIO. These efforts to promote "alternative labor groups" are intended to include both workers (such as taxi drivers) who lack the legal right to unionize, and student workers at university and college campuses. The convention also formally endorsed coalitions with worker centers and other non-labor groups which share similar interests.

**AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka** called on delegates to "do things differently" and begin "the great work of re-awakening a movement of working people" in his keynote address September 9. "It is time, my friends, to turn America right side up. And to turn America right side up, we need a real working class movement. And if that's going to happen, we, our institutions, have to do some things differently," he said. He said despite victories over the past four years, labor faces a Republican Party committed to "a concerted effort to destroy collective bargaining and wipe out our unions, all of our unions, private and public sector, in state after state." He called on delegates to adopt a strategy outlined in the convention resolutions "for winning broadly shared prosperity" in the nation.

**Organized labor pledged to** build strong political alliances with progressive groups such as the NAACP, the Sierra Club and the National Council of La Raza to increase workers' power at the ballot box. "We have to create an economic, political



Pictured left to right; Former AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Arlene Holt-Baker, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka and AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler. Flickr.com photo used under Creative Commons from AFGE.

and legislative climate where our members can succeed,” AFL-CIO President Rich Trumka told the news media. “Our opposition is well-financed and determined. We’re too small to do it alone.” Trumka’s comments reflected the reality of union membership’s decline to 11 percent, from 35 percent in the 1950s. “Only by combining together all these progressive groups are we going to be able to make the changes necessary to make the middle class stronger,” he said. Among the speakers were Sen. Elizabeth Warren and new Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez.

### **AFL-CIO delegates on the last**

day of the convention dealt with the thorny issue of the impact of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) on multi-employer health care plans. Three days of closed-door meetings resulted in a compromised resolution submitted by the Building and Construction Trades Department, the International Union of Operating Engineers and the American Federation of Teachers. The resolution expressed labor’s apprehension about the implementation of the health care law and suggestions for change. The resolution stated “federal agencies administering the ACA have interpreted the Act in ways that are threatening the ability of workers to keep health care coverage through some collectively bargained, non-profit health care funds.” Among other “fixes,” the resolution said multi-employer plans should have access to the ACA’s premium tax credits and cost-sharing reductions and called for changes to the employer responsibility rules. The AFL-CIO reiterated opposition to taxing workers’ health benefits and support for the “preservation of collectively bargained plans, union administered plans, and other plans that cover unionized workers, by eliminating the ACA Excise Tax, Reinsurance Fee and all other fees.”

## **INTERNATIONAL LABOR NEWS**

**Brazilian employees of the** banking sector stopped work September 19 throughout almost the entire country to demand a wage settlement and better working conditions. President of the Bank Workers



Eamon Gilmore, Tánaiste of the Irish Labour Party. Flickr.com photo used under Creative Commons from The Labour Party.

Union of Sao Paulo, Juvandia Moreira, blamed executives of those financial entities for not paying attention to union demands. “Our objective is to affect technological areas and transaction tables, to put pressure on bankers and make them negotiate as quickly as possible with employees,” she said. Among other demands, the union is asking for an 11.9 percent wage settlement, a minimum wage increase, an end to cuts, better working conditions, more security and more job offers for Afro-descendants.

### **Costa Rica’s legislators have**

approved, in first vote, a law that would ensure the rights of domestic service employees in the country. The bill was a result of an agreement between the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Government of Costa Rica. According to the Ministry of Labor, the most frequent complaint filed by domestic workers is the non-payment of severance pay in the case of layoff or firing. Among other protections, the bill bars all forms of abuse, harassment and violence, information on terms of work contract, access to the courts or a complaints mechanism and right to a safe and healthy environment. Typically, in domestic work in Costa Rica, men are hired as gardeners, handymen, etc., while women work as maids, keeping house and caring for children or seniors. A large number of domestic workers in Costa Rica are foreigners, with the single largest group coming from Nicaragua. The Ministry of Labor estimated some 13,000 men and 122,000 women in Costa Rica work in domestic services, in more than 150,000 homes.

### **The Irish government will con-**

sider reforms to give trade unions greater rights to collectively bargain on the part of workers, Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore announced. Action on the proposal is expected later this fall. Speaking at an international trade union conference in Dublin, he said the government also will introduce legislation to restore registered employment agreements as a mechanism for setting pay and conditions for thousands of workers. This system of wage determination was struck down by the courts early in the summer. Eamon Devoy, the general secretary of the electricians’ union TEEU, who organized the conference, said since the collapse of the registered employment agreement system last May strike notices had been served on 15 employers but all had “caved in to observing and maintaining the standards we had set in this industry over many years.”

### **Delegates representing the**

former Canadian Auto Workers and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers unions met over Labor Day weekend in Toronto to give formal approval to the creation of Unifor, the largest private sector union in Canada. More than 4,000 delegates attended the historic founding convention of the new 300,000 member union created out of the merger of the CAW and CEP. According to union officials, thousands more watched the convention through online live streaming. Jerry Dias, a veteran of the Canadian Auto Workers, was elected Unifor’s first president. “Unifor is here because it’s time to stop playing defense and it’s time we started to play offense,” said

Dias in his fiery inaugural address at Uni-for's founding convention in Toronto. "It's time to stop reacting and it's time to start setting the agenda." He said the union would welcome workers excluded from collective bargaining and would devote 10 percent of its revenues to organizing.

### Australian Council of Trade

Unions President Ged Kearney said the proposal by the new Coalition Government to abandon wage increases for up to 350,000 workers in aged and childcare was "a betrayal" of some of the country's lowest paid workers. "Aged and childcare workers do a very tough job and are paid very little and any move to deny their pay increases demonstrates a worrying lack of understanding. Aged care is one of the most important and difficult jobs there are, yet aged care workers are amongst the lowest paid," she stated. Kearney noted the industry is largely staffed by women. She said the action is in direct conflict with Tony Abbott's commitment that no worker would be worse off. "Mr. Abbott didn't want to talk about workplace policy before the election and now we see he wants to tear up an agreement that will deliver a pay rise to some of our most important and lowest paid workers," she charged.

### Hundreds of workers at two

Amazon.com Inc. distribution centers in Germany walked off the job in an ongoing dispute over wages with the American online retailer. The short-term strikes at Amazon centers in Leipzig and Bad Hersfeld lasted for three days. "We can't accept that Amazon won't adopt collective bargaining, gaining a competitive advantage at the expense of employees," Bernhard Schiederig, Ver.di union negotiator at Amazon's Bad Hersfeld site, said in a union press release. Ver.di wants Amazon to adopt wage agreements similar to those governing retail and mail-order workers. Union representatives didn't rule out additional strikes, after repeated labor action since May. "Amazon can count on further strikes, and that will especially hurt Christmas season business," Joerg Lauenroth-Mago, a union representative in Leipzig said. The strikes are the first in Amazon's 15-year history in Germany. The online retailer employs about

9,000 people in Germany, where the company generated \$8.7 billion of its \$61 billion in global revenue last year in the country, making it Amazon's second-largest market after the U.S. Ver.di represents some 2,000 workers in Leipzig and 3,300 employees at Amazon's Bad Hersfeld center.

## NATIONAL & POLITICAL EVENTS

### Federal Reserve Chairman

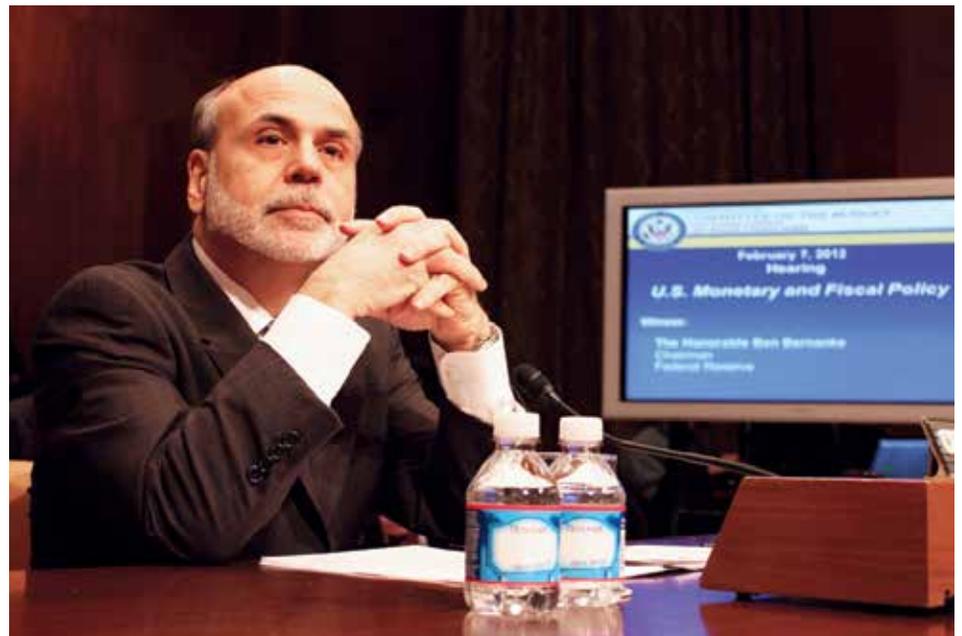
Ben Bernanke suggested the Federal Reserve will not reduce its monthly economic stimulus measures while growth rates are perceived to be too slow, unemployment too high and concerted congressional action to encourage the recovery lacking, Chairman Bernanke suggested at a news conference September 18. He made his comments after the Fed announcement that the long-running \$85 billion per month bond purchasing program would continue. The Fed had earlier indicated that economic conditions might allow for a reduction, known as "tapering, of the policy." "We want to make sure that the economy has adequate support," Bernanke told the news media. He said that the Fed stimulus would remain in place "until we can be comfortable that the economy is, in fact, growing the way we want it to be growing."

### Union and worker advocates

applauded proposed rules by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission to require U.S. corporations to disclose how the paychecks of their chief executive officers compare with those of their workers. They say disclosures would help investors identify top-heavy compensation models where CEOs of many U.S. companies earn hundreds of thousands of dollars more than their workers. "The simple fact is that large pay disparities between CEOs and their employees affect a company's performance," said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. "When the CEO receives the lion's share of compensation, employee productivity, morale and loyalty suffer." The rules are required by the 2010 Dodd-Frank Wall Street reform law. A recent report by the Institute for Policy Studies, which analyzed data on the highest earning CEOs over a 20-year period, said the pay gap between CEOs and the average American worker has grown from 195-1 in 1993 to 354-1 in 2012. The AFL-CIO also has a web site that tracks CEO compensation.

### New rules adopted by the U.S.

Department of Labor will require home health care agencies to pay workers the minimum wage and overtime pay starting in 2013. "Almost 2 million home care workers are doing critical work, providing



Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke. Flickr.com photo used under Creative Commons from Medill DC.

services to people with disabilities and senior citizens who want to live in community settings and age in familiar surroundings,” said Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez. But they are “lumped into the same category as teenage babysitters” under the Fair Labor Standards Act. “This is wrong, and this is unfair,” said Perez. Home care workers have been exempt from pay rules for nearly 40 years because they were considered “companionship.” Unions argued for decades that these workers did much more, including assistance with dressing, eating and other daily activities. The ruling affects home health aides, personal care aides and certified nursing assistants. Republicans criticized the ruling for giving workers too much money in their paychecks.

## **NATIONAL LABOR NEWS**

### **The World Champion San**

Francisco Giants baseball team got caught cheating its lowest paid employees and have agreed to pay \$544,715 in backpay and liquidated damages to 74 workers. The Department of Labor investigated the Major League Baseball team and found that the team failed to properly pay workers over a three-year period. The violations concerned minimum wage, overtime and recordkeeping violations. The workers included clubhouse assistants, video operators and managers. The Labor Department workers often worked an average of 12 to 15 hours daily and received less than the hourly federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour. The California State minimum wage is \$9 an hour and San Francisco has its own minimum wage of \$10.55 an hour. “It was disappointing to learn that clubhouse workers providing services to high-paid sports stars weren’t making enough to meet the basic requirements of minimum-wage law,” said Susana Blanco, director of the Labor Department’s San Francisco District Office of the Wage and Hour Division. The Giants are valued at \$786 million.

### **More than 160 Labor Day**

events were held across the country where the cause of citizenship was promoted as the leading issues for working people,

reports the AFL-CIO. The Labor Day activities followed nearly 200 labor-led actions nationwide during the congressional August recess. The public demonstrations were designed to pressure the Republican-led U.S. House of Representatives to take action on immigration reform legislation. “The ongoing deportation crisis leaves millions of low wages workers subject to abuse by greedy employers while tearing apart families and communities,” said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. “The best way to end this crisis permanently is for the House of Representatives to stop delaying and offer the majority, which supports real reform, an immediate vote on a bill with a reliable roadmap to citizenship.” The AFL-CIO and several affiliates have more than 55,000 signatures on a petition to Speaker Boehner and House leadership asking them for a vote on citizenship in the House, and the number was increased at Labor Day events.

### **Hundreds of fast food workers**

across the US marched August 29 in 50 cities to demand higher wages for fast-food workers. The workers forced fast food restaurants to close and otherwise slowed business as protestors gathered outside store fronts to press their issues. Their action followed a protest last summer when about 2,200 of the country’s millions of fast-food workers staged a one-day strike in seven cities. The Service Employees International Union, which represents more

than 2 million works in health care, janitorial and other industries, provided financial support and training for local organizers around the country. In New York, 300-400 workers marched before flooding into a McDonald’s near the Empire State Building. A McDonald’s restaurant in Detroit closed as workers and protesters chanted outside “hey hey, ho ho, \$7.40’s got to go.” Workers are asking for pay raises to \$15 an hour. Most receive the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour, which adds up to poverty level wages of about \$15,000 a year for full-time employees.

### **Union leaders from American**

Airlines and US Airways led a lobbying campaign last month in support of the proposed merger between the two airlines. If approved, the merger would create the largest airline in the world. But the Justice Department’s antitrust division has filed court action to block the merger saying it would hurt consumers and raise fares. The trial date on the government’s case is November 25. The union leaders told William Baer, head of the antitrust division, they fear jobs will be lost if the airlines don’t merge. “We wanted to make sure they clearly understood how important the merger is to our jobs and our careers. We told them we’ve been in limbo too long,” said Laura Glading, president of the Association of Professional Flight Attendants at AMR Corp.’s American. Other unions included the Allied Pilots Association, the US Airline Pilots Association, the Association of Flight Attendants, and the Transport Workers Union. AMR is counting on the \$13.8 billion merger as part of its effort to exit bankruptcy. The Fort Worth-based company had 72,900 employees at the end of June, and US Airways had 32,210.



Strike at McDonald's. Flickr.com photo used under Creative Commons from Steve Rhodes.

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# LABOR AGENDA

OCTOBER 2013



**Tefere Gebre**  
Executive Vice  
President, AFL-CIO

## 2013 AFL-CIO CONVENTION

Let me express a deeply felt gratitude and thank Rich Trumka and Liz Shuler for having faith in me and inviting me to help lead this movement I love. A movement, without any doubt moving in the right direction. A labor movement positioned to speak, fight and win for all workers.

Thirty years ago, as a fourteen year old Ethiopian child, not only did I dream of America, I started a journey to live out my dreams. That's when a few other friends and I decided to escape the horrors of war and a brutal military government and walked for weeks across the desert to the Sudan. I lived in a Sudanese refugee camp, until I was given a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to come to America as a political refugee.

At the tender age of 15, I started a brand new life in this city of angels. I graduated from high school not far away from this convention center, at Belmont High. To say life as a teen in L.A. without having a parent, or any relative, was not easy would be an understatement. I had to work a full-time job in a liquor store, getting paid cash under the table, studying to be the best student I could be and trying every sport possible in hopes of getting an athletic scholarship. I was lucky I became a good distance runner, good enough to gain a full track and field scholarship.

This is not just MY story. It's a story of millions who proudly call America home. Documented and undocumented, the immigrant story is what makes this country of ours so special.

Once in college, at Cal Poly Pomona, I took a night shift job as a loader for UPS. That's where I got a chance to work my first union job, a job where my rights at work were respected. Where I learned I had a protective shield called collective bargaining.

And so, I stand before you today. I stand before you knowing no political party is our salvation. Our salvation won't come from political consultants or polling firms. Our salvation comes from our solidarity and the work we do with those who share our common values in the community.

Brothers and sisters, I am ready to work. With Rich and Liz, I am ready to work for an America that I dreamed of. For an America that values work and honors those who do the work.

You see, the America I dreamed about expands voting rights, instead of going back to the dark days of systemic discrimination. My beloved America doesn't value the 1st amendment rights of corporations any more than those of the coal miner in West Virginia or the carwash worker in Los Angeles. My beloved America doesn't fire workers for wanting to have a voice at work.

So today, I pledge to you to follow the lead of our leader Rich Trumka and fight not for what is convenient, but for what is right.

To my brothers and sisters in local labor movements, state federations and CLCs, I am one of you. I know how hard your job is, and how important your role is. Each of us has the responsibility to convene the labor movement in our own communities – across unions and sectors and to work in real partnership with allies in the community. That's what we do – and when we are at our best, the labor movement can lead. We need to be at our best, and I pledge to you that I will always be there to listen, advise and help our CLCs and state federations be the best we can be.

I am being asked to fill the shoes of my hero, Arlene Holt Baker. Arlene, thank you for being so strong. Thank you for a life of service not only to the labor movement, but to all who seek justice. You have been a great ambassador of our movement. I know you are not going away and we are all lucky that you will be around leading, teaching and fighting for voting rights, workers' rights and everything in between.

I want to close with this. This is not about me. It's a call from a new labor movement unmistakably saying no matter what your accent, no matter what your skin color, no matter how far from here you were born, come not only to join our movement, but lead it.



Former AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Arlene Holt-Baker. Flickr.com photo used under Creative Commons from wisaficio.

# 2013 AFL-CIO CONVENTION



**AIL/NILICO Convention Team**

AIL/NILICO representatives (shown) had a big presence at the recent AFL-CIO convention. One of the most popular features at the company's exhibition booth was the opportunity for visitors to have their picture taken with life-size cutout pictures of President Obama, Vice President Biden, First Lady Michele Obama and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Many delegates and distinguished leaders visited the AIL/NILICO booth.



**Reviewing the Day's Agenda**

AIL/NILICO CEO Roger Smith (right) reviews the convention agenda with Vice President Victor Kamber



**Illinois**

PR Rep Sue Gilbert, who also serves as First Vice President of the Northeastern Illinois Federation of Labor, and Denise Gilbert, AIL/NILICO PR Director, meet with (left to right) Michael Carrigan, President, Illinois AFL-CIO; Tim Drea, Secretary-Treasurer, Illinois AFL-CIO and Tom Villanova, President of Chicago and Cook County Building and Construction Trades.



**Big Raffle Winner**

On the first day of the convention, the AIL/NILICO raffle winner was Frank Molina Jr., President and Directing Business Representative, IAM District Lodge 70, also President, Kansas AFL-CIO. PR Manager Cindy Cleary makes the gift presentation.



**OPEIU Leader Meets With AIL Reps**

Office & Professional Employees International Union President Mike Goodwin (foreground) meets with AIL/NILICO representatives (left to right), Gary Rothman, Cynthia Cleary and George Farenthold (back). AIL/NILICO representatives are represented by OPEIU Local 277.



AIL/NILICO President Scott Smith (left) welcomes AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Emeritus Linda Chavez-Thompson.



Gary Rothman, AIL Public Relations, greets AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka (right).



Ernie Greco, President Baltimore AFL-CIO.



Fred Mason, State Chairman, AFL-CIO Washington, D.C. and Maryland.



Rick Johnson, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 77.



James McNamara, Communications Director, International Longshoremen's Association.



David Durkee, President, Bakery, Confectionery & Grain Millers Union.



**Labor Day Activities**

AIL/NILICO representatives took a leadership role in Labor Events around the nation. In the left photo, AIL's Dion Dizon (on the stage) co-chaired the annual Hawaii Labor Unity picnic which was attended by 5,000 union families. In the photo she rallies the crowd. In the center photo, AIL's Tim O'Connor (left) was a float judge at the Henryetta, Oklahoma Labor Day celebration. With him in the photo are Bob Bearden, National Association of Letter Carriers 458 and Linda Gerster, Glass, Molders, Pottery Workers Union Local 48. The photo collage (right) shows the activities of AIL representatives in Southern California at the Orange County, Los Angeles and Tri-Counties CLC Labor Day events.



**AIL In Ireland**

UHL representatives recently attended an event which featured the support for Children from the New York Friends of Ireland and the Uniformed Fire Officer's of New York to Our Lady's Children's Hospital.



**ILWU Local 19 Picket Line**

PR Director, Denise Gilbert and PR Manager Shannon Bennett (center) joined members of the International Longshore Workers Union Local 19 picketing the Seattle tunnel project. The union members picketed the \$3.1 billion tunnel project over a job dispute.



**Fast Food Workers Strike**

AIL/NILICO supported thousands of fast food workers who staged a nationwide protest at the end of August to publicize their demands for a living wage. In the photos, (left) fast food workers march in Memphis while, (right) in Nevada, protestors mob a local fast food operation.



**APRI Convention**

AIL/NILICO's George Farenthold meets with Service Employees Union President Mary Kay Henry at the recent A. Philip Randolph Institute convention.



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