

AFL-CIO RETIREES ASSOCIATION

RETIREES NEWS

Inside this issue:

Field Staff Retirees Get Together in Las Vegas	2
Trumka on the Economy & Jobs	3
Americans 45 and Older Now Majority of U.S. Electorate	3
In Memoriam	4
Michael Podhorzer Named AFL-CIO Political Director	4
SC Workers Tell Gov. and Other Lawmakers to Focus on Good Jobs	5
NY Times Article Spotlights Pivotal 2010 Senior Vote	5
Officers	6
Annual Meeting Notice	6

Workers Memorial Day Dedication at the National Labor College

By: Jim Ellenberger

As a former member of the Safety and Health Department and, somewhat earlier, of the International Affairs Department, I feel that I am uniquely entitled to write this piece.

Most of you know that the AFL-CIO has been honoring those killed, injured or diseased from their work through special events, celebrations and actions on April 28th each year. Peg Seminario, our incomparable Director of Safety and Health, has been the spark plug and inspiration for this introspection on what our jobs and occupations mean to our health and well-being for the last 23 years. This event and its date have been adopted by unions around the globe as the day to honor those who have paid with their lives or health to grow, build, manufacture or service the things that make life possible for all of us, and it serves to underscore the importance of re-dedicating ourselves to making all workplaces safer.

Several years ago the National Workers Memorial was established at the National Labor College to pay tribute to workers who were killed on the job. Placed throughout the monument will be numerous granite benches, each engraved with a special memorial message from supporting unions and organizations. The memorial will include thousands of simple bricks, each engraved, with the name of a fallen worker. Each brick, in addition to the name, will state the date of death and the name of their union or occupation. The college will catalog the location of a given brick, and publish a directory of the names and brief tributes.

At this year's Workers Memorial Day at the National Labor College some 90 bricks were dedicated to workers who paid the ultimate price of going to work – they never came home.

There to honor the fallen were luminaries from the labor movement and the government.

Three of the bricks being placed at the memorial this year bore the names of individuals whose sacrifice at work bore special meaning for many of us.

They were Michael A. Hammer, Mark Perlman and Jose Rodolfo Viera.

Thirty years ago, on the morning of January 3, 1981 to be exact, these three trade unionists went into the coffee shop of the Sheraton Hotel in San Salvador, El Salvador to discuss organizing amongst the poorest of the poor. Viera was the President of the Peasants Workers' Union of El Salvador, Hammer was the Director of the Agrarian Union Development Department of the AFL-CIO's American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), Perlman was a recent addition to the AIFLD staff. They were gunned down in cold blood by death squads of the country's National Guard, probably acting on behalf of wealthy agrarian interests.

Present at the ceremony at the National Labor College on April 28th were Tom Donahue, former President of the AFL-CIO and Michael P. Hammer, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, and Michael A. Hammer's son.

Neither Tom Donahue nor Michael P. Hammer was asked to speak and, sadly, no one who did speak mentioned the names, or the sacrifice, of Michael A. Hammer, Mark Perlman or Jose Rodolfo Viera.

Some of us were not proud of our leaders on April 28th this year.

AFL-CIO Field Staff Retirees Get Together in Las Vegas

By: Steve Bieringer

For the second time in three years a group of AFL-CIO field staff retirees got together in Las Vegas for a couple of days to swap stories, tell lies (well at least exaggerate a bit), and catch up with our Brothers and Sisters from back in the day. This year several of the department's headquarters staff joined in along with various family members who added to the group and the festivities. The get together was meaningful and fun enough that the group decided to do it again next year from June 18th to the 22nd, so get out your calendar and block those dates. Phil Priola will once again find decent rates, as he did for this year at the Golden Nugget (\$42 a night for hotel rooms), and along with Gary Horton, who initiated the reunion both times, will help coordinate the gathering.

In addition to Gary and Phil, stories were told and laughs were shared by Lewis Albright with his wife and two grandchildren in tow, Beulah Carter, Don Glenn, Kevin Kisner, Green Lewis, Ann Mickens, Diana Perez and her husband, hostess extraordinaire Jill Priola, Matt Taylor, and Kevin Kistler as well as David Gregory from the COPE staff. Helping to keep everyone in line, as they always have, were Virginia (Hazel) Asbury, Bren Leiss whose delightful sister Carole tagged along, and Sandy Queen with her golf partner/husband. Several others wanted to attend and sent best regards including Tom Donahue, Joe Shantz, Ed Kisner, Victor Munoz, and Harry Helser.



Absent this year but in attendance in 2009 were Jay Dee Patrick and his wife, Chano Merino from the COPE staff, and Tom Patterson who passed away in the interim. My apologies to anyone I forgot to mention but...well you all know about aging memories.

The Golden Nugget provided us with our own section of the coffee shop at 10 a.m. each morning for breakfast which allowed time for everyone to discuss the previous night's ad-

ventures or misadventures and plan out activities for the day which included shopping, golf, sightseeing, the tables, and just more visiting. Once again the highlight of the reunion was the afternoon/evening get together at Phil and Jill Priola's home in Las Vegas. Grill master Phil turned out super steaks and chicken breasts accompanied by Jill's salad, garlic bread, and fruit salad all of which added taste to the camaraderie and singing of labor songs led by Matt Taylor. Question: When was the last time you joined hands to "Solidarity Forever"?



Don't miss the next opportunity from June 18th-22nd 2012.

Interested in the 2010 reunion? Send me an email at stachel1@comcast.net and I will keep you updated as plans develop. Feel free to contact me with any questions or suggestions. I will be in touch with Gary who is having some internet connections problems for a while.

Two final notes: First, it was clear that all attendees at both the 2009 and 2011 reunions found it worthwhile and exciting. Second, all those who attended would love to see more of their Brothers and Sisters in 2012 so start making your plans now.

Note from Jim Ellenberger:

I want to thank Steve Bieringer and Bren Leiss for their notes about this year's gathering of the Field Staff retirees in Las Vegas. I also want to thank Phil Priola for the great pictures he sent. As an aside, Steve is not letting the grass grow beneath his feet and is proving that retirees can add to the cultural life and enjoyment of their communities by hosting "Afternoon Jazz with Steve Bieringer on Jazz 89, Denver Public Radio. You can listen each Tuesday and Wednesday, 2-4 Mountain Time on KUVO 89.3 Denver or KVJZ 88.5 Vail or streaming at KUVO.org; click on "listen now." I've done it and it's great! Thanks Steve!!



Notes from Bren Leiss:

Virginia Asbury and Bren Leiss along with her sister Carole are still talking about the wonderful time they had attending the West Coast session of the AFL-CIO Retiree Association's annual meeting, reception and dinner held each year in Las Vegas at the Golden Nugget Hotel. Organized by Gary Horton and hosted by Phil Priola, attendees met for breakfast and then enjoyed an evening of fantastic food and camaraderie followed by entertainment courtesy of Matt Taylor and his guitar at Phil's beautiful Las Vegas home.

Don't miss the opportunity to see old friends, rehash stories and sing union songs with fellow retirees and make plans now to meet up in Las Vegas next year for the "field" version of the AFL-CIO Retiree Association's annual get together.

Trumka on the Economy and Jobs at the National Press Club

By: Laura Clawson on the Daily Kos, May 22, 2011

[AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka's](#) speech at the National Press Club this week provides an important context for why we need to be paying attention—careful, specific attention—to the war on working people. Not just union workers, let's be clear. Although unions are often the most visible target (or scapegoat), this extends way beyond unions to an assault on the broader American middle class, and that's how Trumka approached it.

America's economic fate depends on us coming together to educate our children, to invest in our infrastructure, to face the threat of climate change and to reverse the yawning economic inequality that threatens our future.

Let me be specific. Unemployment stands at 9%. Under-employment is at 16%. Housing prices are falling, and foreclosures remain at historic highs. Economic growth is hovering at around 2% annually—not enough to put a dent in unemployment, especially as tax cuts expire, as the Recovery Act winds down—and state and local governments gear up for more deep cuts.

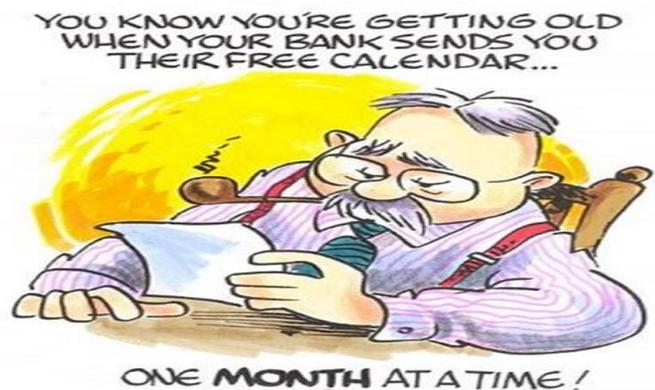
Yet instead of having a national conversation about putting America back to work to build our future, the debate here in Washington is about how fast we can destroy the fabric of our country, about breaking the promises we made to our parents and grandparents....

Why is our national conversation in such a destructive place? Not because we are impoverished. We have never been richer. The American economy has never produced as much wealth as it does today. But we feel poor because the wealth in our society has flowed to a handful among us, and they and the politicians who pander to the worst instincts of the wealthy would rather break promises to our parents and grandparents and deny our children a future than pay their fair share of taxes.

Americans Aged 45 and Older Now the Majority of the U.S. Electorate

Friday Alert, Alliance for Retired Americans, May 6, 2011

New data is showing that Americans aged 45 and above now account for 119 million Americans, and over 51% of the voting-age population. This number has risen from 46% in 2000, and highlights an overall trend of an America that is getting older. The preliminary figures are based on the Census Bureau's 2009 population estimates as well as the 2009 American Community Survey, which samples 3 million U.S. households. Broken down by subgroups, older boomers ages 55-64 were the fastest-growing group since 2000, jumping 43 percent to approximately 35 million. They were followed by seniors 85 and older, who increased 33 percent to more than 5.5 million, due largely to medical advances that have increased life spans. Based on actual election turnout, which is higher for older Americans, census data show that baby boomers and seniors ages 45 and older represent about 60 percent of voters in national races, judging by the 2008 presidential race. Nearly 1 out of 2 voters is 50 or older. "These numbers should give pause to elected officials who want to dismantle Medicare, or turn it over to private insurance companies," said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. To see the full AP story, go to <http://bit.ly/mw5Ymc>.



Michael Podhorzer Named AFL-CIO Political Director

WASHINGTON, DC, June 28, 2011 -- Michael Podhorzer will be the new political director for the 12 million-member AFL-CIO, driving one of the largest independent campaign operations in the country, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka announced today. Podhorzer becomes director after having served at the AFL-CIO as deputy director of the political department since 2005. He came to the AFL-CIO in 1997.

In his new role, Podhorzer will work to advance the labor movement's top political priorities: elevating the issues central to the lives of working families, deepening and expanding participation by union members and other working Americans in winning progressive change, electing candidates who support working people to local, state and national government and holding those leaders accountable once elected.

"There's no one better to direct the political work of the labor movement than Mike Podhorzer," said Trumka. "Mike is both a brilliant strategist and a passionate advocate whose commitment to building political power for working women and men is unrivalled. The rigor and energy he brings to our efforts are exactly what we need to counter the relentless attacks on working families – and union members in particular – fi-

nanced by Wall Street and legislated by the politicians they elected."

Podhorzer, who was highlighted in a 2010 New York Times magazine article for his analysis and testing of voter mobilization models, pioneered the development of data-driven campaign tactics that were later deployed in the historic 2008 election of Barack Obama. He helped lead a labor program to reach working class voters in the challenging 2010 political cycle, when the program reached 17 million union voters in 26 states and delivered 64 percent of the union vote to endorsed candidates. A life-long activist and agitator, Podhorzer has worked in politics for the last 30 years. As Associate Director of Citizen Action, he managed the organization's extensive electoral activities, including successful congressional, state and local campaigns.

While at the AFL-CIO, Podhorzer helped establish Working America, the community partner of the AFL-CIO which has grown to 3 million members nationwide. He is a founding chair of the Analyst Institute, a clearinghouse for evidence-based best practices in progressive voter contact, and he serves on the Board of Managers for Catalist, which runs a database and data tools for the progressive community.

IN MEMORIAM

We mourn the following retirees or spouses who have passed away recently. We will report on the passing of our brothers and sisters as information becomes available to us:

Patricia (Pat) Blado, 66, died on April 11, 2011 in Hewitt, Wisconsin. Pat had served in the International Affairs Department and is survived by her husband Robert, four children (Dawn Howdyshell, David, Amber and Michael), and 11 grandchildren.

Thomas (Donny) Clark, 79, died on May 1, 2011 in Charlotte Hall, MD. Donny had worked for nearly 42 years at the AFL-CIO. He retired in May 1993 as Director of Purchasing and Supplies. He is survived by his wife Kay Bussink Clark, five children (Edward, Bernadette Clerkin, Thomas, Jr., Kevin and Brian), 12 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Robert Georgine, 79, died on March 29, 2011 in Silver Spring, MD. Bob had served as President of the Building Trades Department and, later, headed up the Union Labor Life Insurance Company. He is survived by his wife Mary Rita, four children (Robert, Jr., Georgine Baugher, Rosemarie Hechinger and Mary Beth Cotterell), and 9 grandchildren.

Paul Sanderson (no information).

Betty Perlis, 90, died on February 22, 2011 in Miami Beach, FL. Betty was the surviving spouse of Leo Perlis. No further information.

South Carolina Workers Tell Gov. Haley, Other Lawmakers to Focus on Creating Good Jobs, Hold Boeing Accountable for Breaking the Law

(CHARLESTON, SC—June 17, 2011) – South Carolina workers called on South Carolina Representatives, Gov. Nikki Haley and other lawmakers to focus on creating good jobs and to stop their political three-ring circus in defense of Boeing lobbyists and CEOs. Workers spoke prior to a politically-motivated hearing – organized by California Rep. Darrell Issa and attended by Gov. Haley and Reps. Gowdy, Scott and Wilson – on Boeing and the NLRB Friday in North Charleston.

"We have heard a lot of talk recently about what is right for South Carolinians from lawmakers, both here in our state and in Washington D.C.," said Joe Shelling, a mill worker at the Cap Stone paper mill in Charleston. "Well, I am here today, as a South Carolinian, to share my opinion about what we need to create good jobs and a stronger economy and it isn't the political grandstanding you see here today."

Workers emphasized that South Carolinians support Boeing bringing jobs to the state but the corporation should not break the law in order to do it. Federal Law Enforcers filed a complaint against Boeing in April and a trial began this week to hold Boeing accountable for its blatant retaliation against Washington State workers for exercising their protected rights (see back for more details on the complaint).

"South Carolinians want good jobs, including the jobs Boeing has to offer, but employers who break the law, like Boeing is doing in Washington State, need to be held accountable

and must respect workers' rights," said Georgette Carr, a Charleston long shore worker. "As a grandmother, I am very much concerned about our economic future. But we need to make sure that employers who come to South Carolina play by the rules and are willing to respect workers' rights."

South Carolina workers also emphasized today's hearing is part of a broader political assault on working families taking place across the country.

"This is just another example of the extreme political agenda being pushed by politicians around the country to reward corporate CEOs and lobbyists who are rigging the system – not working families," said James Johnson, a recently laid off construction worker from Summerville. "We have seen it Wisconsin and Ohio, with the attacks on public service workers, in Washington DC with the GOP budget plan to gut Medicare, and now right here in our backyard."

"The right-wing attacks on the NLRB have nothing to do with the facts of the case or the economy, and everything to do with politics," said Erin McKee, Charleston Labor Council president. "Working people play by the rules, and so should businesses. But corporate lobbyists and Republicans in Congress are attacking the National Labor Relations Board—a neutral, independent agency—for asking Boeing to play by the rules. The fact is that retaliating against workers—as Boeing's own statements indicate it may have—is against the law."

New York Times Spotlights Pivotal 2012 Senior Vote

Friday Alert, Alliance for Retired Americans, June 10, 2011

A recent article in the *New York Times* focused on how seniors will play an integral role in deciding the outcome of the 2012 elections. While Election Day is still 17 months away, seniors have already emerged as a key voting bloc because of heightened attention to programs such as Medicare and Social Security in fiscal debates. This was shown most dramatically in the May 24 election to fill a vacant U.S. House seat in up-state New York. Political analysts have said that the winner, Democrat **Kathy Hochul**, greatly benefited from rising public sentiment against Republican plans to privatize Medicare. Hochul won a seat that had been held by Republicans for 40 years.

The *New York Times* noted that with baby boomers retiring, and the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis still lingering, Americans are now paying closer attention to Medicare and Social Security. According to the National Council on Aging, a non-profit advocacy group, approximately 13 million older Americans are economically insecure, living on \$22,000 or less. These financial stresses, combined with history of high turnout, could make seniors a swing voting bloc in the upcoming election. "It will be crucial for seniors to know where the candidates stand on issues affecting current and future retirees" said **Barbara Easterling**, President of the Alliance.

Annual Meeting Set for Saturday, November 5



Come and see old friends and colleagues at the next annual meeting of the AFL-CIO Retirees Association. We will be meeting from 1:30 to 5 p.m. in the Samuel Gompers Room at the AFL-CIO building.

In addition to electing officers (President and Vice President), we will be hearing from officials

of the federation about the state of the labor movement and plans for the 2012 elections. As at past meetings, we will get reports from our health plan, the bargaining units, and pension trustees.

Following the meeting, the Association will host a reception featuring adult beverages and heavy hors d'oeuvres. We are in discussions with the building manager to see if we can have someone on duty to let retirees park in the garage during the meeting and reception.

The AFL-CIO Retirees Association *Retiree News* is the official publication of the AFL-CIO Retirees Association; is a member of the International Labor Communications Association, AFL-CIO; is published at least quarterly; and mailed to all members in good standing. Membership is open to anyone receiving a retirement check from the AFL-CIO. Associate Membership can be granted by vote of the Association Officers. Association dues are \$24 per year, payable annually (prorated if joining after January) or by monthly payroll deduction of \$2. Letters or articles of general interest to the membership are welcome and should be submitted to the editor by fax, e-mail, or postal mail. The *Retiree News* does not accept paid advertising.

AFL-CIO Retirees Association Officers

President:

James N. Ellenberger
1820 Batten Hollow Road
Vienna, VA 22182
703/938-8349
ellenbergerjn@cs.com

Vice President:

Michael Ingrao
901 N. Monroe Street, #1306
Arlington, VA 22201
703/528-7251
mikeingrao@gmail.com

Recording Secretary:

Janet Coco
7203 Beachway Court
Springfield, VA 22153
703/644-1715
janetcoco@yahoo.com

Treasurer:

Marge Tracey
900 McKinley Road
Arlington, VA 22205
703/237-7233
traceymarge@verizon.net

Editor, Retirees News

Marjorie Wheeler
4537 Peacock Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22304
703/751-7749
mlw4537@aol.com

