

New Strategic Alliance

March 30, 2008

Four unions with more than two million members will be working together in a new strategic alliance to achieve critical economic, political and legislative goals.

The Communications Workers of America (CWA), the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the United Steelworkers (USW) have committed to sharing resources around the four key priorities for members of these unions and all working families: the Employee Free Choice Act, health care, jobs and fair trade, and retirement security.

The four unions are committed to achieving the four priority goals, through joint political and legislative strategies, mobilization and other work. The Alliance also will work with other unions and organizations to achieve these goals.

CWA, IFPTE, UAW and USW all are built on the model of membership action and mobilization. They share a focus on industry-wide organizing and collective bargaining and lead the labor movement in union democracy and transparency.

The unions are convinced that an unprecedented opportunity is at hand to build a new and vital labor movement that will be an effective voice for working families in today's global economy.

The first step, passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, "is within our reach," they said in a joint statement, pledging to work "in determined unity and provide the significant resources needed to build a political movement which will force workers' rights and protections to the top of our national agenda."

"Now is the time for a new national dialogue on trade," said UAW President Ron Gettelfinger. "There's a growing awareness that the failed policies of the past aren't working – and by joining together, members of our four unions will be an even more effective voice for a new, sustainable approach to the global economy that protects workers, consumers, and our environment."

"Working people who have health care are struggling to maintain it," said USW President Leo W. Gerard, "and thousands are being thrown out of the system every day, a system that's already consuming 16% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GD). It's time that America met the health care challenges the way the rest of the industrialized world has by making health care universally affordable and accessible."

"This partnership will enhance our ability as a union to challenge political leaders of all stripes to do what is truly necessary to address the many critical concerns of America's working men and women," said IFPTE President Gregory Junemann. "Backed by the two million members of these four proud unions, this historic alliance will call on Washington to not only make it a crime for CEOs and CFOs to raid the retirement and pension funds of their workers, but to also reform our laws so that rogue corporations will be unable to turn a blind eye to their pension obligations by simply asking a bankruptcy judge to declare them null and void. Not only does this leave workers out in the cold after saving a lifetime for retirement, it also transfers the responsibility of paying some of these lost pensions onto the taxpayer. While Congress found a way to prevent honest, hard working Americans from declaring bankruptcy, they did nothing

to prevent this kind of corporate malfeasance. We at IFPTE look forward to working in conjunction with this alliance in protecting the pensions and retirement savings of America's workers."

"Only by restoring bargaining rights for U.S. workers will we be able to transform our political landscape, achieve such critical goals as universal health care and begin to rebuild the middle class," said CWA President Larry Cohen. "Our unions have long worked to promote workers' rights. This Alliance enables us to expand those efforts and resources and help build a political movement that will make real gains for working families, starting with the Employee Free Choice Act," he said.

The need to stop the assault on U.S. workers and restore real bargaining rights is critical. Today, America has the lowest collective bargaining rate of the industrialized world -- less than 8 percent of private sector U.S. workers have collective bargaining coverage -- and many developing countries have overtaken the U.S. in terms of ensuring true workers' rights.

At a recent forum for members of Congress and global union leaders, labor experts testified that routine interference with basic democratic rights in the workplace that is tolerated and accepted by the U.S. government as "business as usual" is infecting labor relations worldwide, making this a critical concern for the entire international labor movement.

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About UAW: The UAW is one of America's largest and most diverse unions, with more than one million active and retired members from manufacturing, public service, health care, higher education, gaming and other industries.

About USW: The United Steelworkers represents 1.2 million active and retired members in the U.S and Canada working in a wide range of industrial and service sectors, including steel, rubber and tire, paper and forestry, oil, aluminum, brick and glass, mining, parts and component manufacturing and health care.

About IFPTE: The International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers represents more than 80,000 men and women in professional, technical, administrative and associated occupations. IFPTE represents workers in the federal, public and private sectors.

About CWA: The Communications Workers of America represents 700,000 workers in information technology and communications, media and printing, airlines, manufacturing, and public service, health care and higher education.