

# Labor Secretary Solis Standing With Workers In Fight For Rights

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## 10,000 CWA Members Participate in History-Making Phone Call



With 10,000 CWA members on the line, President Larry Cohen placed a historic phone call Wednesday night to Labor Secretary Hilda Solis, who pledged her support for workers fighting to save their collective bargaining rights.

"Budget sacrifices are one thing but demanding that workers give up their voice is another," Solis said. "The governors aren't just asking us to tighten our belts; they're demanding we give up our uniquely American rights as workers."

Solis, who comes from a union family, said she is "so inspired and proud" of CWA and the hundreds of thousands of union and non-union workers nationwide who are taking on the states' aggressive union-busting agendas.

Shamefully their targets are "the men and women who care for our neighbors, teach our kids, keep our communities safe and clean, and run into burning buildings when others will not," she said. "They do their work with little fanfare and don't expect recognition, but through unions they have a voice in the workplace and in their future, and that's what's put us in the middle class."

Thanking Solis, CWA President Larry Cohen said, "Those were historic words, a member of the cabinet standing with us as clearly as you do, and speaking for the president of the United States."

Cohen announced that more history will be made as CWA, fellow unions and their allies plan "enormous, movement-wide dramatic action" to mark the anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King, Jr., one month from now. King was killed April 4, 1968, while in Memphis to

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march with the city's striking sanitation workers. See stories below for more details on April 4 and other actions you can take now.

CWA members in some of the embattled states also spoke on Wednesday's call, along with Alex Hanna, co-president of the University of Wisconsin's Teaching Assistants Association. The son of two Egyptian immigrants, Hanna went to Egypt during the uprising last month that overthrew President Mubarak and now has been at the center of Wisconsin's protests.

"I returned to Madison to an environment that was very different, but also very troubled," Hanna said, describing the pride of organizing 1,000 people to march on what turned out to be just the first day of protests that have drawn tens of the thousands of people to the capitol for nearly three weeks.

"We're standing firm," Hanna said. "The fight that began in Wisconsin won't be finished until we rebuild a worldwide labor movement."

CWA private sector members share that passion. Local 2201 President Chris Lane described the bus trip last Friday from Virginia to Trenton, N.J., where 200 members from Locals 2201, 2222, 2275 and 2336 rallied to support CWA and other public workers. Wide awake and full of enthusiasm as they left at 4:30 a.m., they were even more energized on the return trip, asking, "What's next?"

Lane said some of his own passion comes from serving as a Marine in Africa, the Middle East and other hot spots. "I saw people living in terrible conditions and I was proud and felt blessed to be an American. I still do. But it is nevertheless disgraceful to come back from a third-world country and see CEOs trying to trample their workers' rights while making 450 times as much money as any one of them. And they, like the governors trying to silence public employees, still want more -- more money, more power and more control," he said.

Irene Abraham of CWA Local 1109 described how 93 of 100 workers at her Verizon garage, and more than 100 other members of her local, took personal time off to stand with the workers in New Jersey. "I'm proud to say I was at the rally," Abraham said. "If we allow these union-busters to take away the rights in the public sector, we will be next. This is not just an attack on unions but on the whole middle class."

Angie Schritter of Local 4900 in Indiana said she was overcome with pride taking part in the protests at her state capitol in Indianapolis. "My heart beamed last week when our crowd of 3,000 at the statehouse grew to 10,000 by the next day," she said. "My family is proud to be union and we will fight this battle for as long as it takes. To those who want to destroy us and the middle class, hear this: We outnumber you. We are united. And we will not go away."

*Click [here](#) to listen to Wednesday's call. Or go to [www.cwa-union.org/workers-rights](http://www.cwa-union.org/workers-rights) where you can listen to it and CWA's first nationwide call February 23.*