

Labor *Family* NEWS

PARTNERING WITH UNIONS TO PUT FAMILIES *first* WINTER 2010

In this issue:



- **The Millennial Generation and Work Family Balance**
- **Report on Minimum Wage Violations**

UNIONS WIN IT!

WHAT: Educational Leave of Absence

WHERE: Michigan

WHO: United Automobile, Aerospace & Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW) Local 6000 & the State of Michigan

UAW Local 6000 members employed by the State of Michigan can request full-time educational leave of absence without pay for up to two years to work toward an Associates Degree or a Baccalaureate Degree and/or any advanced degree. Employees are eligible for such an educational leave if they are admitted as a full-time student in an educational institution and the education is directly related to the employee's field of employment. The employee may also return early from the leave upon approval by the employer.

MORE ON 2

THE CHANGING WORKPLACE:

Union Women Build Power

BY VIBHUTI MEHRA

The American family and workforce are undergoing a sea change. Women now make up almost half of all workers in the United States. And mothers are the primary breadwinners or co-breadwinners in nearly two-thirds of American families. Yet workplace policies on hours, wages, benefits, and leave continue to assume that the American worker is a male breadwinner with no family caregiving responsibilities. But the growing number of women in the labor movement may influence unions to push for policies that better reflect the current reality.

In October 2009, California First Lady Maria Shriver and the Center for American Progress (CAP) released *The Shriver Report: A Woman's Nation Changes Everything* bringing to light the dramatic transformation of American society, family and workplace. The report shows that:

- Only 21 percent of families with children at home are "traditional" families (a married couple with the husband as the sole breadwinner).
- While an increasing number of women are primary and co-breadwinners, they continue to get paid 23 cents less than men for every dollar earned.
- Our current laws and programs are either outdated or inadequate in guaranteeing family friendly workplace benefits for both women and men with caregiving responsibilities.

UNION WOMEN CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING

The American labor movement is also witnessing a demographic shift in its rank and file and this presents a huge opportunity to address the issues highlighted by *The Shriver Report*. Women now comprise over 45 percent of unionized workers. A November 2009 report by the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR) entitled *The Changing Face of Labor*,

1983-2008 projects that by 2020 women are expected to be the majority of union workers. "When you have a majority of women in the labor movement, issues like work-family balance, paid sick days and paid parental leave become more important," said John Schmitt, Senior Economist and co-author of the report (Associated Press, November 2009).

Anna Burger, Chair of Change to Win, agrees that women in the labor movement will make the difference: "Because of women, we don't just talk about raising wages, but about creating family friendly workplaces with sick leave, child care, and family and medical leave... We don't just talk about out-of-control insurance costs, but about the fact that women pay more than men strictly because of their gender."

PRIORITIZE WORK FAMILY

Work family benefits are becoming increasingly important as women constitute the majority of informal care providers for spouses, parents and parents-in-law. In balancing their work and caregiving responsibilities, women are faced with a greater risk of financial challenges due to lost wages from reduced work hours, time out of the workforce, family leave or early retirement.

As the number of women in the labor movement grows, so does the responsibility of unions to transform the American workplace. "If there is one institution that has the values and the political clout to create family friendly workplace policies, it's the American labor movement. Yet, women continue to drop out of labor market participation because too often it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to work full-time while providing stewardship for our families and nurturing and sustenance for our children," said Amy Dean, co-author of *A New Deal: How Regional Activism Will Reshape the American Labor Movement* (Huffington Post, December 3, 2009). "Despite political rhetoric, work/family balance issues remain on the periphery of workplace issues to be addressed. We really cannot wait – and shouldn't wait ten years – for work-life balance issues to become a priority of collective bargaining," Dean said.

To see *The Shriver Report*, go to www.awomansnation.com



Women Power:

Hundreds of Union Members Turned Out to the UFCW Women's Network Convention in October.

Photo Courtesy of UFCW Women's Network

WHAT: *Extended Unpaid Parental Leave*

WHERE: *Ohio*

WHO: *American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 4 & Berea Board of Education*

A permanent full-time and part-time employee of the Berea Board of Education represented by AFSCME Local 4 can receive unpaid Maternity, Paternity, or Adoption Leave up to two years in addition to the remaining part of the year in which she/he begins the leave. As per the collective bargaining agreement, the employee is required to return at the beginning of the school year or when the child is three years old, whichever comes first.

Looking for good work family contract language? Have some of your own to share? Get ideas, find resources and share your successes at www.learnworkfamily.org



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ORGANIZING YOUNG WORKERS:

Millenials Seek Work Family Balance

BY BRANDY DAVIS

At a 2009 Labor Day press conference, soon-to-be appointed AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka emphasized the importance of engaging young workers in the labor movement, “We’re beginning to develop and create strategies to engage young people in the economic conversation. We’re going to reach out to young workers in an unprecedented way to push for an economy that works for young people and all working families.” The AFL-CIO is planning a major summit in 2010 to hear from young workers about their workplace experiences and needs. What are the experiences and priorities of young workers today? What issues motivate young workers to become leaders in the labor movement?

THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

The Great Recession has had a significant impact on American workers of all ages, but it has taken its greatest toll on young workers. The Millennial Generation - young adults roughly between the ages of 18 and 29 - entered the recession at a disadvantage and continue to trail behind workers of all other age groups. The economic challenges for Millennials are staggering: highest rates of unemployment and underemployment; largest percentage without health insurance; most likely to hold jobs without employer provided health insurance, pensions and other benefits; and skyrocketing student loan debt. And the Millennials are the biggest generation in size, already exceeding the number of baby boom-

ers. Though they face the uncertain prospect of being the first generation in recent history to be worse off than their parents, one thing is certain - Millennials are sure to have an impact on the American workplace.

WORK FAMILY CONFLICTS FOR YOUNG WORKERS

Given the economic challenges young workers face today, an agenda that prioritizes job creation, education reform and universal health care clearly speaks to the needs of the Millennial Generation. It is a common belief that young workers lack family obligations and do not prioritize workplace supports like family leave, sick time, child care and flexible scheduling. But the Millennials’ attitudes toward work and family, and the rising level of work family conflicts that young men and women report, tell a different story.

The experience of Lilly Flores, Organizing Director of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), Local 1428, exemplifies how important work family balance is to young workers. At 21 years old, Lilly worked as a lead manager in a grocery store. For two years, Lilly was scheduled to work every holiday, and cover workers who called in sick or took vacations. “I understood the demands of the industry, but sometimes I felt discriminated against as a young worker. I felt obligated to work and prove myself in the workforce because of my age. Just because I was young, they assumed I didn’t have any children or family responsibilities,” said Lilly.

ORGANIZING MILLIENIALS: SOME CONCRETE STEPS

- Promote worker-student solidarity by reaching out to college students. APALA convened workers and students at their national convention, Generations United: Organizing for Change.
- Survey young members and workers about their work family responsibilities. For a sample survey, visit www.learnworkfamily.org.
- Build programs for mentoring and leadership development of young workers in your union. AFSCME’s Next Wave gets young union members active and ready for future union leadership.
- Include young workers in bargaining committees and bargain for benefits young workers need to balance work and family.

But Lilly did have family responsibilities - during those two years she was supporting a daughter as a single parent. Some of her coworkers knew she was a parent, but her managers assumed these issues didn’t apply to her. “Everyone needs time with their family no matter what age they are. Most of the time, young workers just don’t talk about it.”

MILLENNIALS’ ATTITUDES TOWARD WORK

According to a 2008 report by the Center for American Progress (CAP), the Millennial Generation has more progressive views about economic issues than any other generation today and previous generations when they were younger. Their views about issues from universal health coverage to



Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance organizers turned young workers and students out to the summer convention. Photo credit: APALA

The Millennial Generation – young adults roughly between the ages of 18 and 29.

The economic challenges for Millennials are staggering.



government spending on education stand apart from the less progressive views of other generations today and in recent history. When it comes to business, young workers want a modernized workplace – a workplace where employers recognize their family responsibilities outside of work.

California's First Lady Maria Shriver and CAP recently released a report about the impact of a workplace where women constitute half of the workforce, *The Shriver Report: A Woman's Nation Changes Everything* (see front page story). A Rockefeller/Time poll released in conjunction with the report found that the battle of the sexes has been replaced with negotiations between the sexes – negotiations about work, family and household responsibilities, child care and elder care. According to *The Shriver Report*, "Men and women agree that government and business are out of touch with the realities of how most families live and work today." And young adults are leading this transformation of attitudes about work and family.

In a 2000 study of work and family life by the Radcliffe Public Policy Center, the importance of family resonated most strongly with young adults, and quite surprisingly, young men. For young workers the most important job characteristic was having a job that allows for family time, even above high salaries and job prestige. These results are not as surprising for young women, with women overall ranking time to spend with family as most important. But young men under 40 also put family time at the top of their priority list, distinguishing themselves from their fathers and grandfathers. A recent poll by the AFL-CIO in their report, *Young Workers: A Lost Decade*, supports these findings. Having time for personal or family priorities was the most important career goal for young workers, with making a good income coming in at a close second.

MILLENNIALS SUPPORT UNIONS

Young workers have good reasons to be engaged in the labor movement, and their attitudes toward unions show it. The Millennial Generation is more supportive of labor unions than older people today and previous generations at the same age. In the over 40 year history of CAP polling on union support, Millennials show the second highest level of support for unions of any age group or generation. 18 to 35 year olds comprise a quarter of union membership today, and these members have greater upward mobility than their peers. The Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR) reports that young workers in unions have 12.4% higher wages than their peers, are 17 percentage points more likely to have employer-provided health insurance, and 24 percentage points more likely to have a pension plan. Unionization supports upward mobility for young workers at a time when young workers face dire economic challenges.

As unions develop strategies for organizing more young workers, and fostering the leadership of young workers in unions, the importance of work family issues should not be ignored. Young workers care about universal health care, green jobs, and other pressing social issues; but research and experience shows us that young workers also prioritize building a new workplace that respects their family responsibilities. According to Lilly Flores, "There are young people in the workforce and in unions, the challenge is how to make them activists for the labor movement. Organizing is not only about getting your message out, it is about finding out workers' needs and helping them address it. Young workers care about wages and working conditions, but they also care deeply about their families."

NEWSWORTHY

■ **FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, JOB LOSSES HAVE BEEN CATASTROPHIC.** In August 2009, the unemployment figure was 9.3% for those without disabilities, but for the disabled it climbed above 17%. A 2008 Department of Labor report found that companies often fear that hiring disabled workers will lead to higher costs and lower profit margins. But other studies, including a recent study by Job Accommodation Network, found that 67% of companies with active disability employment programs enjoyed higher morale and better retention overall. *BUSINESSWEEK*, 10-2-09; *WFC Resources Newsbrief 2009*

UNBELIEVABLE

■ **THE USE OF TELEWORK IS INCREASING AROUND THE COUNTRY** as employers look for more ways to save money. Some companies, like American Airlines, are even requiring certain employees to work from home as they shut down local call centers to cut costs. *The Hartford Courant*, 8-23-09

■ **MANY EMPLOYERS ARE IGNORING MINIMUM WAGE AND OVERTIME LAWS** and those who do are rarely caught or prosecuted, according to *Broken Laws, Unprotected Workers*, a new report out of University of California, Los Angeles and City University of New York. The study found that Latino foreign-born workers suffered the highest minimum wage violations, women were significantly more likely than men to experience violations and, among US born workers, African Americans experienced three times the violation rates. For the full report, go to www.nelp.org

POLICY BRIEF

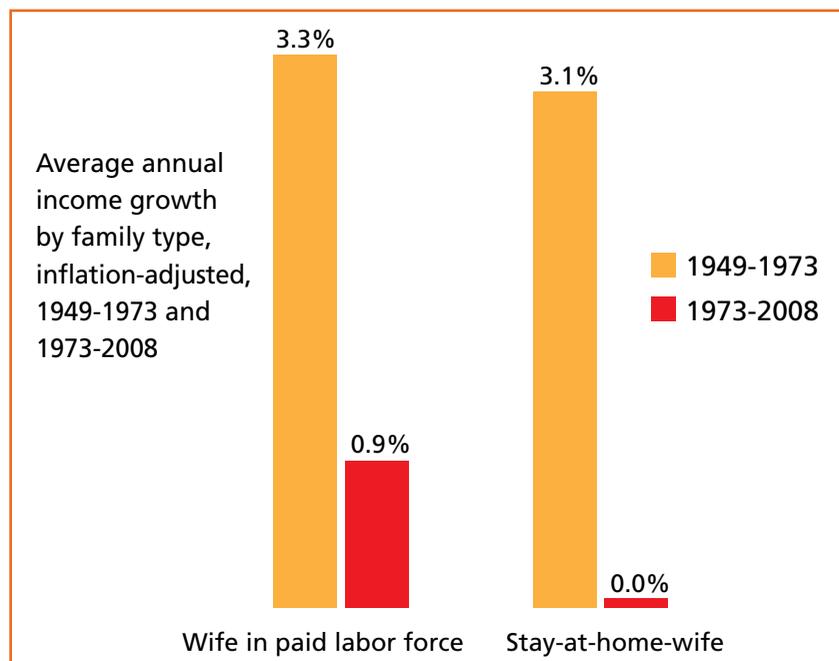
■ **NEW BRITISH DADS CAN NOW TAKE PARENTAL LEAVE.** Britain's mothers get up to a year of maternity leave with 39 weeks of it paid; now the government says they can transfer up to six months' leave, three of them paid, to their babies' fathers. *BBC News*, 9-15-09; *WFC Resource Newsbrief October 2009*



VITAL STATISTIC

Married working couples struggle to get ahead

Couples with and without a working wife saw income grow at about the same pace from 1949-1973, but only those with a working wife saw income growth after 1973



Source: Author's analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement.

Reprinted from *The Shriver Report: A Woman's Nation Changes Everything*.

Labor Project for Working Families

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to download resources on organizing, bargaining and advocating for work family issues.

As part of a small project with Cornell, the Labor Project has been interviewing young organizers and while we don't have



any hard core "findings" yet, the interviews have been fascinating. Young organizers are using creative ways to reach out to new members. And young workers are articulate about their work family conflicts: they care deeply about time with families and how they will manage their jobs with their family life in the future.

We have compelling reasons to make work family issues a high priority in our workplaces and in our unions: Women now make up half the workforce; they are 45% of union members; and young workers prioritize time with family. Being in a union means higher pay, better benefits and dignity on the job. Union members are more likely to have work family benefits and more likely to take advantage of government policies like the Family and Medical Leave Act.

There is activism at the state and federal level on these issues. We are part of a network of 14 state labor-community coalitions (Family Values @ Work) advocating for paid sick days, paid family leave and other work family issues. These coalitions helped pass paid family leave in New Jersey, paid sick days in Milwaukee and paid parental leave in Washington. At the federal level bills have passed to expand family leave for military families and flight crews.

Are we at a tipping point? We think so. Families in the U.S. have changed and the workplace needs to change with it. Unions and community coalitions play a vital role in making this happen. Contact your union or check out the state coalitions and the national work family agenda at www.familyvaluesatwork.org

Executive Director

Netty Frierstein

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Include your name, organization and full address including zip code, phone number and email.

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CWA Local 9000

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