In this issue:

- More than 1000 People Attended the WH Summit for Working Families
- In the Fight for Schedules That Work

THE WHITE HOUSE SUMMIT on Working Families

BY CAROL JOYNER

Shirley Young is a certified nurse at Isabella Nursing Home in NYC. She’s also the mother of teenage twins and a member of 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. On June 23, Shirley joined other activists, parents, and advocates at the White House Summit on Working Families in Washington, DC. While she was one of more than 1,000 attending the Summit, she was only 1 of 4 who had lunch that day with President Obama!

Overcome with excitement by being selected to join the President for lunch at Chipotle, Shirley regained her composure enough to describe her most difficult work and family situation. It began when her son was diagnosed with scoliosis at the age of 14. The diagnosis and planned surgery filled her with dread. According to Shirley, “if we didn’t do the surgery then, he’d probably be in a wheelchair today.” The good news is that Shirley belonged to a union. She could both be available to her son during the hospitalization and take time off to care for him through recovery. And she had sufficient health care to cover a $60,000 medical expense. These basic rights were available to Shirley because she and her union had secured full family health coverage and time off with pay. Being there when your loved one needs you - this is what a 21st century workplace looks like.

“Neither do you hear from the President, First Lady, Vice-President, Dr. Jill Biden and the Secretary of Labor at a single event.”

The White House Summit was huge. Rarely do you hear from the President, First Lady, Vice-President, Dr. Jill Biden and the Secretary of Labor at a single event. AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer both lifting up the plight of workers and the different ways that unions are part of the economic solution in America. We also heard from several union members who, like Shirley, were there to tell their stories.

GOING BEYOND THE SUMMIT

The White House Summit was huge. Rarely do you hear from the President, First Lady, Vice-President, Dr. Jill Biden and the Secretary of Labor at a single event. They made their mark on work and family issues, telling stories about their personal struggles and sharing policy proposals to make it easier for all workers. President Obama announced some proposals that can help: funding to study the paid family leave systems that exist in CA, NJ and RI; getting Congress to pass the budget which includes a State Paid Leave Fund; increasing FMLI, using the White House as a bully pulpit to motivate local leaders to move paid sick days and paid leave and having the federal government lead the way by modeling flexible work practices. For an overview and highlights of the White House Summit on Working Families, go to www.workingfamilinessummit.org.

The opportunity is great – and so is the work we need to do. We’ve got to increase bargaining and organizing on work and family issues. The Labor Project is updating our bargaining database to make sure we’re capturing the most recent benefits negotiated. We’ve also pulled out bargaining examples into a separate document called “Models for Bargaining.” Find these and other resources at www.working-families.org. Unions and worker groups are fighting in every region of the nation for representation on the job, paid sick days, paid family leave, decent wages of $15.00 per hour, scheduling improvements and accommodations for pregnant workers, among many other issues. Join the fight for these struggles by going on our site or www.familvaluesatwork.org.

To win, we’ll have to fight on all fronts, at the bargaining table, in the legislature and in the streets. We may get support from current or future administrations. But in the end, building a 21st workplace that supports all families is up to us.
today, women make up two-thirds of the low-wage workforce, working as home health aides, child care workers, fast food servers, maids and cashiers. In addition to their responsibilities as breadwinners, women in low-wage jobs are also very likely to have responsibilities as caregivers. But the work scheduling practices in these fast-growing, low-wage jobs often put work and family responsibilities on a collision course.

All too often, workers in low-wage jobs have very little say in their work schedules—many are unable to make even minor adjustments to pick up a child from a child care provider, or get to class or a second part-time job. To qualify for full-time hours, some employers require workers to have no limitations on their availability for work whatsoever— even when the employer is open 24/7. For single moms this requirement can be nearly impossible to meet. Across a range of shift work industries, workers often report getting their schedules only a week or less in advance. Some workers are sent home from their shifts early without being paid for the shift, simply because there are fewer customers that day. Call-in shifts, which require workers to call in on the day of a potential shift to find out if they have to work, are a particularly egregious form of unpredictable scheduling. On top of not knowing when they will work, workers often do not know how much work they will get—work hours—and thus wages—frequently fluctuate by week, time of day, and length of shift.

These unpredictable and unstable schedules over which workers have little control are a byproduct of employers’ attempts to shift the risks of doing business from employers onto workers. The cruel irony is that attempts to match labor costs as tightly as possible to consumer demand through “just-in-time” scheduling do not help the bottom line. Instead, they contribute to absenteeism and higher workforce turnover, as workers leave jobs with nightmarish scheduling practices and uncertain incomes searching for a better life for their families. It doesn’t have to be this way. Labor unions have proven that over and over again by bargaining for and implementing sane work schedules. For example, members of Local 3 United Store Workers who work at Bloomingdales receive their schedules 21 days in advance. Employees of Cooperative Home Care Associates, a worker-owned staffing agency in New York City are guaranteed 30 hours of pay each week, even when 30 hours of work are not available. Many union contracts require reporting time pay (a minimum shift pay for employees who report to work and are sent home), curb mandatory over-time, provide for employee input into scheduling, and require advance notice of schedule changes.

But in non-unionized workplaces, and particularly in low-wage jobs, abusive scheduling practices are rampant. In a recent research project with the Ms. Foundation and five workers’ centers we asked working parents about the fallout from these often difficult, and sometimes abusive scheduling practices. They told us that these schedules made it nearly impossible to cobble together childcare, hold down a second job, or go to school.

Movement leaders are tackling this problem head on. For example, workers at The Retail Action Project and OUR Walmart are winning campaigns for fair work schedules. State and local policymakers are jumping on board too—San Francisco and Vermont have recently passed laws protecting workers who make scheduling requests from retaliation and local policy efforts to curb unpredictable scheduling are under way in San Francisco and New York City. Eight states and the District of Columbia have enacted reporting time pay laws. D.C. and California have split shift pay laws, which require employers to provide an extra hour of pay when an employee works a nonconsecutive shift with a long break in the middle that is not for a meal or rest period.

Workers demonstrating for fair scheduling practices with the Retail Action Project, an initiative of the RWDSU.
GOOD LEGISLATION

I THIS PAST YEAR, SEVEN STATES AND DC HAVE RAISED THE MINIMUM WAGE. Michigan’s grassroots effort to raise the minimum wage by $1.25 was successful, and Union women earned an average of $12 per hour, which is good for employers’ bottom lines as well.

Behind the groundswell of enthusiasm for improving scheduling practices is this simple truth: When workers have a say in their work hours and more predictable and stable schedules, they are less likely to miss work due to child care or other conflicts, and are better able to hold onto their jobs. And that’s not only good for workers and the families who depend on them, it’s good for employers’ bottom lines as well.

The Labor Project for Working Families - National Advisory Board (NAB)

We’re pleased to introduce the amazing labor women who comprise the NAB. Their direction and support has carried the LPWF through many years of success!

RESEARCH

THE UNION ADVANTAGE

THE TRUTH IS IN THESE NUMBERS. Union women earn on average, 13 percent more than their non-union counterparts - even in traditionally low-wage occupations. Union women are 36 percent more likely than non-union women to receive employer-sponsored health care and 53 percent more likely to participate in an employer-sponsored retirement plan or pension plan. Also faring better with regard to work and family policies, union members are also more likely to use the Family Medical Leave Act, have paid parental leave, access to paid sick days and other supports that all workers need. Read this important report by Center for Economic and Policy Research at http://www.cepr.net/documents/women-union-2014-06.pdf and find out more.

DID YOU KNOW?

TELECOMMUTING HAS HISTORICAL ROOTS. Back in 1881, recently freed laundresses, eager both to care for their own families and to earn income as domestic workers, built an industry of taking in laundry. This work accommodation permitted them to wash the clothing of more privileged families in their own home or communities, where they could also care for their family members. These 19th century workers, who were later joined in this practice by garment industry piece workers, are our telecommuting mothers. Read more about women and labor during and post reconstruction in Tera Hunter’s To Joy My Freedom.
The LPWF was there to witness President Obama’s signing of executive orders strengthening equal pay protection for workers employed by federal contractors.

In solidarity,

Laura Reyes, Secretary Treasurer, AFSCME is seen below addressing a panel on young women workers.

Many union leaders were at the WH Summit for Working Families. Laura Reyes, Secretary Treasurer, AFSCME is seen below addressing a panel on young women workers.

In solidarity,

Laura Reyes, Secretary Treasurer, AFSCME is seen below addressing a panel on young women workers.

In this Issue:

Many union leaders were at the WH Summit for Working Families. Laura Reyes, Secretary Treasurer, AFSCME is seen below addressing a panel on young women workers.

In solidarity,

Laura Reyes, Secretary Treasurer, AFSCME is seen below addressing a panel on young women workers.

In this Issue:

Many union leaders were at the WH Summit for Working Families. Laura Reyes, Secretary Treasurer, AFSCME is seen below addressing a panel on young women workers.

In solidarity,

Laura Reyes, Secretary Treasurer, AFSCME is seen below addressing a panel on young women workers.

In solidarity,

Laura Reyes, Secretary Treasurer, AFSCME is seen below addressing a panel on young women workers.

In solidarity,

Laura Reyes, Secretary Treasurer, AFSCME is seen below addressing a panel on young women workers.

In solidarity,

Laura Reyes, Secretary Treasurer, AFSCME is seen below addressing a panel on young women workers.

In solidarity,

Laura Reyes, Secretary Treasurer, AFSCME is seen below addressing a panel on young women workers.

In solidarity,