

The Professionals Guild of Ohio



PGO UNION NEWS

December 2014

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**P.O. Box 7139
Columbus, Ohio 43205**

**Questions or comments can
be directed to the Executive
Director.**

E-Mail:

cmason@professionalsguild.org

Website:

www.professionalsguild.org

Like us on Facebook

Phone:

**614-258-4401 or
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Fax:

614-258-4465

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Unions, Minimum Wage Linked to Prosperity

*By Nicole D. Jackson, Esq.,
PGO Field Representative*

U.S. Department of Labor Secretary Tom Perez often publicly supports labor unions and has recently stated in a speech that labor unions are “intrinsically linked to overall worker prosperity in America.” Unfortunately, prosperity for the majority of Americans has been lagging. Secretary Perez noted that Canada has fared better than the U.S. in the last decade largely due to much stronger labor union participation.

Secretary Perez is also calling for Congress to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour and pushing for legislation to provide paid paternal leave for the birth of children. “There is no dignity in working 40 or 50 hours a week and getting your food at the pantry,” said Perez. He also noted that while unemployment is falling and hiring has grown, the people stuck on the lower-end of the pay scale and in the middle class are at a standstill.

Support for raising the minimum wage at the state level was five-for-five after the November 4 midterm elections. By convincing margins, voters in Alaska (69%), Arkansas (65%), Nebraska (59%), South Dakota (53%), and Illinois (67%) voted to raise the minimum wage. In Alaska, Arkansas, Nebraska, and South Dakota, the

change will be implemented at the state level. In Illinois, however, the ballot measure was a non-binding resolution to urge the state legislature to act on raising the state minimum wage. States have the authority to raise its own minimum wage, as long as it is not lower than the Federal minimum wage.

According to Secretary Perez, the U.S. minimum wage isn't keeping up with the rest of the world: the U.S. ranks third to last among Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations when minimum wage is measured as a percentage of median wages.

The value of the minimum wage isn't keeping up with the rising cost of living, in fact, it's lost 20 percent of its value since the 1980s, Perez reports. “In 1968, a full-time wage worker could support a family of three. Today, a minimum wage job barely covers one person's basic needs. More than 88 percent of minimum wage workers are adults, many supporting a family.”

The struggle over raising the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour continues. And, after low voter turnout resulted in control of both the U.S. House and U.S. Senate by republicans, unfortunately, it does not appear that this issue will be favorably resolved anytime soon.



“Do not let any calamity-howling executive with an income of \$1,000 a day, who has been turning his employees over to the Government relief rolls in order to preserve his company’s undistributed re-

serves, tell you...that a wage of \$11.00 a week is going to have a disastrous effect on all American industry.”

- President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1938.

Want to Save the Government Money? Raise the Minimum Wage

By Paul Henry, PGO Field Representative

It’s been more than five years since the federal minimum wage was increased to \$7.25 an hour. Clearly, this has not kept pace with the inflation rate. For those earning above the minimum wage, this may not appear to be that big of a problem. But, the fact is, as a taxpayer, you have to pay more to provide services to those earning these poverty wages.

About half of all workers earning less than \$10.10 receive public assistance in the form of Medicaid as well as SNAP, WIC, and many others. These programs are costing the government over \$45 billion a year. If the federal minimum wage were to be raised to \$10.10, 1.7 million Americans would no longer need additional assistance. Even though a raise of close to three dollars an hour may seem substantial, if the minimum wage kept pace with worker productivity, today it would be almost eighteen dollars an hour.

Raising the minimum wage would lift the income for millions of working Americans and their families while providing a significant savings to the government’s social safety net programs. This savings could then be repurposed into new programs or used to expand others to help fight poverty within this country. Raising the minimum wage is a simple and overdue step in improving the lives for all American workers.

UAW Lock-Out Ends

By Nicole Jackson, Esq., PGO Field Representative

About 174 workers and members of United Auto Workers Union (UAW) Local 2387, were locked out of their jobs from June until November this year. Their employer is Hayashi Telempu North America in Lebanon, a city in Warren County, Ohio. The factory makes interior parts for automakers.

Reports state that the company and its workers entered into negotiations to renew their contract expiring May 31, 2014. The company proposed to cut workers' pay by about \$2.50 per hour and double the workers' contribution to health insurance. However, after a two week contract extension, the company suddenly locked-out its workers; refusing to negotiate, mediate, or talk to the press. To make matters worse, the company terminated the workers' health insurance and life insurance policies and even froze their 401k accounts so they would not be able to access them to get cash.

The company's lockout seemed planned because according to reports, in the six weeks leading up to the lockout, workers were required to do mandatory overtime to meet what the company called "increased demand." Workers reported that after a shift ended at 3:15 p.m. on June 14, security guards were set up at the plant’s entrances and told the workers on Sunday not to show up for work that Monday.

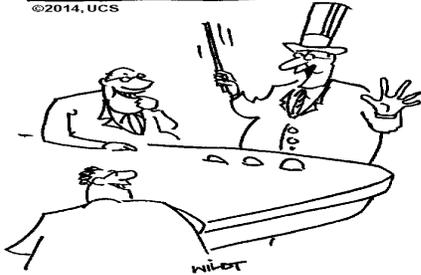
Workers immediately began picketing. Due to the lack of visibility of the picket line, the lockout received little to no press. Still, the workers were picketing in shifts outside the company's four entrances twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week



“The snow came from the clouds, but it was assembled in America.”

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“And for our next trick, we’ll outsource jobs while cutting wages and benefits at home and make the middle class disappear!”

since June. Fortunately, because this was a lockout and not a strike, the workers were eligible for unemployment compensation. However, unemployment insurance pays at most 50 percent of the lost wages, and those benefits do not last forever. Many workers would have reached their unemployment compensation maximum by January 2015 had the lockout continued.

After nearly five months on the picket line and locked out of their jobs, the company finally agreed to come back to the table. The members, however, voted down a contract proposal on Oct. 20. Finally, a deal was reached for a 4-year contract on Oct. 26.

The union reports that the company continued operations during the lockout with managerial and temporary staff hired to fill their jobs. Charges filed by United Auto Workers in June alleging unfair labor practices by the company are still pending. The charges allege that the lockout was unlawful and involve the termination of employees’ health and life insurance benefits during the lockout. By the way, Warren County, Ohio is one of only four counties in the entire state of Ohio that voted to uphold Senate Bill 5 in 2011.

This Holiday Season, Buy Union

By Nicole Jackson, Esq., PGO Field Representative

It is hard to believe that the end of the year is already upon us. This is the time of the year that many of us will be spending money on holiday gifts. If you are looking for gifts made in the USA by union workers, check out the Union Label website at www.unionlabel.org. Additional websites include www.unionplus.org and www.labor411.org that

provide resources for buying union-made goods and services in your community.

If you are traveling for the holiday, visit www.hotelworkersrising.org before booking your hotel reservations to make sure the hotel is not on the list of boycotts due to its poor labor practices. And, as always, pack your stocking stuffers with treats from **Butterfinger, Hershey's, Godiva, Russell Stover,** or **See's Candies**, all made by union brothers and sisters.

When it comes to shopping or buying gift cards, purchase from **Albertsons, Costco, Fry's, Giant, Giant Eagle, Kroger, Macy's, Meijer, Safeway, or Vons**, all staffed by members of UFCW and Teamsters. Looking to buy a computer? Check out www.unionbuiltpc.com or www.computersmadeinusa.com to find union built, made in the U.S.A. computer systems.

Lastly, no holiday is complete without stocking the bar at your holiday party using union produced wines including **Chateau Ste. Michelle, Columbia Crest, Dollarhide Ranch, Scheid Vineyards Inc., Arbor Mist, Balletto, Charles Krug, C.. Mondavi, St. Supery,** and **Gallo of Sonoma**. Union made beers include **Anheuser-Busch, Budweiser,** and **Miller**.

If you really want to know the social impact of the products you buy, download the **free** boycott app called "**Boycott**" by Boycott Inc. for a handy bar-code scanner and grocery store shopping bar code reader.

PGO encourages its members to support union-made products and labor-friendly retailers this holiday season. Have a happy Holiday!



Reynoldsburg Teachers End Strike With Big Win

By Paul Henry, PGO Field Representative

October 9, 2014, the Reynoldsburg teachers voted to end their 15-day strike by approving a tentative agreement reached late on October 8. Most of the main issues which drove the teachers to strike were resolved while other issues moved in the right direction with reasonable compromises.

Class sizes have been an issue for the Reynoldsburg teachers. The larger the class size, the more difficult it is to adequately meet the needs of every student. In their negotiations, they were able to get the board to agree to “class size goals.” Though this does not create a hard cap on class sizes, it is a step in the right direction for addressing this problem.

One of the more egregious demands the board attempted to force on the teachers was the removal of the employer provided health insurance. The board proposed to provide cash payments and force the teachers to shop for health insurance plans on the federal and state exchanges. The teachers were able to maintain their same employer provided health insurance when their strike ended.

The board also sought to eliminate experience step increases in the contract. Instead, it proposed to put all of the teachers on a merit pay system. There would have been no compensation for additional education or years of service. The board’s proposal would require raises to be based off of “merit” with very little detail of how the merit would be determined. The teachers were able to stave off this assault and maintain their salary structure, but they did agree to additional incentives and bonuses tied to performance.

This strike was a victory for the teachers; however, their fight is not over yet. The board has reportedly withheld money from the teachers for work that was done prior to the strike. Now, the teachers may have to pursue legal action against the board to recover their lost pay. Even though the battle was won by the teachers, the struggle continues.

Wal-Mart: When Profits Soar, Cut Employee Benefits

By Paul Henry, PGO Field Representative

Anti-union retailer, Wal-Mart, is at it again. In the past fiscal year, Wal-Mart increased net sales by 1.6 percent. This increase resulted in a \$473.1 billion gain for the company. Of this close to half a trillion dollars, \$12.8 billion was returned to shareholders through dividends. Wal-Mart now ranks first on the Fortune 500 list of “the world’s largest companies by revenue.”

This retail giant, who clearly has enough money to provide wage increases and improved benefits to its employees, has decided not to share its abundant gains with workers. Wal-Mart will be cutting benefits for 30,000 of its part time employees. If this weren’t bad enough, it is also increasing the insurance premium amounts its employees must pay by 19 percent. These are the latest moves to beat down workers to increase already record-high profits.

So what does this mean for the average American? Your tax dollars are going to subsidize Wal-Mart’s workforce. Most full-time Wal-Mart workers qualify for food stamps. In a 2013 Congressional report, it was estimated that each store could cost taxpayers as much as \$900,000 due to the workers requiring government aid. Now, since Wal-Mart has dropped benefits for its workers as well as increased premiums, this number is expected to drastically increase. So remember, if you choose to make a bottom dollar purchase at Wal-Mart, you will be paying the rest of the cost in taxes to subsidize aid for the workers earning poverty wages. Instead, shop **Meijer** and **Kroger**, both staffed by union workers.

PGO Office Holiday Schedule

In observance of the Christmas and New Year Holidays, the PGO office will be closed on December 24, 25, 26, 31, January 1 and 2.

