

The Professionals Guild of Ohio



PGO UNION NEWS

June/July 2015

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Eric Kanthak

Vice President

Joe DeStazio

Secretary

Lynn Pinkelman

Treasurer

Dan Rice

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“Fast Track” Threatens American Jobs

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

Many of you might be aware of an issue that will hit American workers hard, especially in the private sector. Sometime in May, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the controversial bill known the “Trans-Pacific Partnership” (TPP) through “Fast Track,” which is a bill that governs how trade deals become law. The bill is now headed to the Senate for consideration.

This Fast Track legislation (S.955/H.R. 1890/H.R. 1314) is a trade deal that would ship more U.S. jobs overseas and force the U.S. to compete with countries that have weak labor laws. This bill would drive U.S. wages even lower, create special rights for foreign companies, and place U.S. manufacturers at a major disadvantage. The process of Fast Track allows for no amendments and limited debate on trade deals such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Bottom line, Fast Track legislation shrouds trade deals in secrecy and it lacks transparency. Congress would not be allowed to amend or fix trade deals that harm our economy. American citizens would not even have the opportunity to provide input

to proposals while the deal is being negotiated. There is no democracy in legislation like Fast Track.

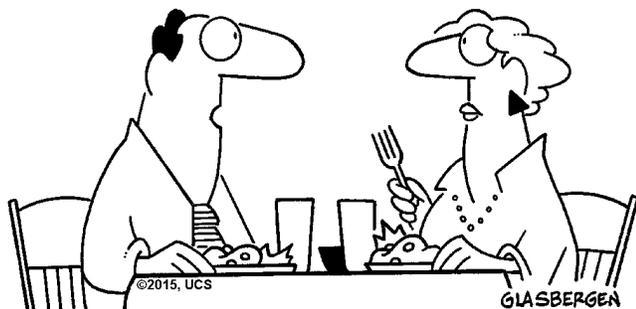
American manufacturing jobs will take devastating losses if fast track is passed. Write your U.S. Senator Rob Portman (R) and tell him that Fast Track is a BAD DEAL for American workers. Text FAST to 235246 to get updates from the AFL-CIO on Fast Track and how you can help save American manufacturing, raise wages, and protect jobs.

PGO Elects Officers

PGO has elected its officers this year and as it turns out, the old will be the new. All incumbents have been reelected and will continue to serve new two year terms that will run from June 20, 2015 through June 19, 2017.

Eric Kanthak, PGO Council 12 (Montgomery County Children Services) will continue as our president, *Joe DeStazio*, PGO Council 13 (Lucas County Children Services) will continue to serve as vice president, *Lynn Pinkelman*, PGO Council 13, will remain the secretary and *Dan Rice*, PGO Council 12, will continue to be our treasurer.

Congratulations goes out to these outstanding members on their reelections.



“On one hand, I’m troubled that one of my employees is using medical marijuana. On the other hand, it’s nice that someone is actually laughing at my jokes.”

OPERS Changes its Health Care Coverage

By Nicole Jackson, Esq., PGO Field Representative

New changes to the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS) health care coverage have already went into effect for 2015, and more changes to the plan will be effective in 2016. Prior to the changes, only 10 years of service was needed to retire and receive health care coverage under the OPERS plan.

This year, there was a key change in the minimum age and qualifying service credit eligibility requirements. The minimum eligibility for health care allowance is now age 60 with 20 years of qualifying service credit. However, workers with 30 or more years of qualifying service credit are eligible to retire and receive health care coverage at any age.

Another key change is related to spousal health insurance coverage. Unfortunately, spouses under age 65 will transition to no health care allowance (2015-2017), but will have access to OPERS coverage at full cost at a minimum through 2019. Spouses over age 65 will have access to the OPERS Medicare Connector beginning in 2016. The OPERS Medicare Connector is a company that helps retirees to select a plan in the Medicare marketplace to supplement the coverage by original Medicare.

Coverage for retiree's children has also changed. If the OPERS member retires with at least 20 years of service and is enrolled in the health care plan, children up to age 26 will receive half of the retiree's allowance percentage.

For workers that retire with less than 20 years of service, children up to age 26 will transition to a \$0 allowance over three years (2015-2017) and then have

access to coverage at the full cost at a minimum through 2019.

Open enrollment for the OPERS health insurance coverage is held each year in the fall. You can contact OPERS at 1-800-222-PERS (7377) if you are close to retirement and have questions about whether you and your family will be eligible OPERS health insurance coverage.

Summer Vacation Checklist

By Nicole Jackson, Esq., PGO Field Representative

The winter months are now behind us and we’re all getting ready to pack our bags for this year’s summer vacation. If you haven’t already, now is a good time to submit your vacation request to your Employer.

Most contracts require that you submit your request for vacation well in advance, usually at least two weeks prior to the date you are requesting off. With all paid time off, the sooner you can put your Employer on notice that you need those days off, the better your chances are of getting the PTO approved. Some contracts have special rules for when two employees request the same days off, and seniority might control.

Remember to make sure you have an adequate amount of accrued vacation leave available to cover the time.

While planning and when you get to your destination, be sure to support businesses that are labor friendly. The AFL-CIO website at unionlabel.org, has a list of national boycotts against business that are either hostile to their workers, or the workers are on strike.

The Hyatt Regency in Boston, Santa Clara, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Antonio, Seattle, and Indianapolis are all on the AFL-CIO boycott list. Check the AFL-CIO union guide at unionhotelguide.com or download the AFL-CIO iPhone app that lists which hotels to patron or avoid.

PGO wishes everyone safe travels on their summer vacations this year!



Election Results in PGO Councils

Congratulations to the following members for being elected to office in their respective councils.

PGO Council 3, Cuyahoga Falls Library:

President: *Barb Holdren*
Vice President: *Joni Kennedy*
Secretary-Treasurer: *David Parvin*
Steward/Professional: *Jen Morton*
Steward/ Para-Professional: *Mary Baldwin*
Executive Board/AFL-CIO Delegate: *David Parvin*

PGO Council 7, Butler County Board of Developmental Disabilities (Paraprofessionals Unit):

President: *Kelly Ray*
Vice President: *Joan Langguth*
Secretary: *Chris Jasper*
Treasurer: *Terri Elms*
Steward: *Ernest Webb*

PGO Council 8, Guernsey County Children Services:

President: *Roy Higgins*
Vice President: *Hilaree Homko*
Secretary-Treasurer: *Kim Feldner*
Executive Board Delegate: *Jeff Policoff*
AFL-CIO Delegate: *Kari McFarland*

PGO Council 10, Greene County Children Services:

President: *Shane Caldwell*
Vice President: *Karen Kibler*
Secretary-Treasurer: *Kate Mezera*
Executive Board Delegate: *Cassandra Ewing*
AFL-CIO Delegate: *Casey Slater*

PGO Council 12, Montgomery County Children Services:

President: *Jane Hay*
Vice President: *Deborah Wilson-Robinson*
Secretary: *Tara Twitty*
Treasurer: *Dan Rice*
Executive Board Delegate: *Vicki Carter*
AFL-CIO Delegate: *Dan Rice*

PGO Council 14, Aurora Academy:

President: *Kimberlie Todd*
Vice President: *Erin Crawford*

PGO Council 15, Lucas County Correctional Treatment Facility:

President: *Alyssa Zagata*
Vice President: *Derrick Ford*
Secretary-Treasurer: *Henry King*

Stewards: *Derrick Ford; Geoffrey Thomas; and Larry Taylor*

Executive Board Delegate: *Lott Smith*
AFL-CIO Delegate: *Kennedy Oliver*

PGO Council 16, Athens County Board of Developmental Disabilities:

President: *Audra Harrison*
Vice President: *Mark Shrivvers*
Second Vice President: *Margaret Casey*

PGO Council 17, Clark County Board of Developmental Disabilities:

President: *Frank Raynor*
Vice President: *Pam King*
Secretary-Treasurer: *Amy Kostic*
Executive Board Delegate: *Amy Kostic*
AFL-CIO Delegate: *Amy Kostic*

PGO Council 18, Henry County Children Services:

Chief Steward: *Kirsten Ruby*
Assistant Steward: *Amanda Westhoven*

PGO Council 19, Northridge Local Schools (Montgomery County):

President: *Cathy Larson*
Vice President: *Christina Baker*
Secretary-Treasurer: *Cheryl Shriver*
Executive Board Delegate: *Jeff Hatton*
AFL-CIO Delegate: *Cathy Larson*
Stewards: *Annie Kirk and Lisa Ehrhart*

PGO Council 20, Montgomery County Board of Developmental Disabilities:

President: *Richard Long*
Vice President: *Patty Burcham*
Secretary-Treasurer: *Shelia Brannon*
Executive Board Delegates: *Kwanie Tennie*
AFL-CIO Delegate: *Mary Martone*
Chief Steward: *Chris Landrum*

PGO Council 21, Butler County Board of Developmental Disabilities (EIS Unit):

President: *Mindy Flora*
Vice President: *Beverly Nagel*
Secretary-Treasurer: *Christine Obregon-Anderson*
Chief Steward: *Stephen Wendland*
Steward: *Brittany Sizemore*
Executive Board Delegate: *Debbie Trent*

Thanks for stepping up for your Union and co-workers by accepting these important jobs. We look forward to working with each of you over the next two years.

Butler County Children Services Settles Contract

By Paul Henry, Esq., PGO Field Representative

After almost two years of bargaining and a strike, the Butler County Children Services Independent Union (BCCSIU) has finally ratified a new contract. Initially, the BCCSIU was told that they would only be provided lump sums as “increases.” This was unacceptable to the Union. When the Employer was unwilling to budge, the Union went on strike.

It was during this time that the Employer laid off thirteen employees. This led to an Unfair Labor Practice charge by the Union. It was during the hearing of this ULP that the Employer and Union were finally able to come to some agreement. The Employer agreed to pay the laid-off workers over \$9,000 and settle the contract by providing the employees a two percent increase in their pay ranges as well as the possibility of future two percent increases through merit pay.

It took over 27 bargaining sessions, almost two years, and a month long strike for the BCCSIU to get a contract. Though Union President, Becky Palmer, remains skeptical about the merit pay system, she stated “Given a choice between the county’s merit pay system and continuing this lengthy labor dispute, the union felt it was in the best interest of the agency and the families we serve to accept the proposed contract. At a minimum, we hope that resolving this labor dispute will lead to greater cooperation in the future.”

BCCSIU deserves to be recognized for taking a stand against an employer’s unfair demands and getting a better deal for themselves.

Wal-Mart Caves—Raises Wages

By Paul Henry, Esq., PGO Field Representative

Wal-Mart, one of the largest anti-union superstores, has buckled under pressure and will finally raise its employees’ wages. After mounting pressure from the labor supported “Fight for 15” campaign, Wal-Mart will be raising its employees’ wages from the minimum wage to at least ten dollars an hour. Wal-Mart has also stated that it will now let employees choose their own hours.

Though this news is a victory for the labor movement, it is not an outright win. Wal-Mart still remains one of the most anti-union employers out there. This move by Wal-Mart may improve condi-

tions for employees, but it does not go far enough. Higher wages and some control over erratic scheduling practices do not guarantee anyone a full time position. The wage increases, though greatly needed, still do not provide a living wage to anyone, especially while only working part-time.

Even if this is not the victory we had hoped for, it still is a victory. When enough people are willing to stand up and fight for better wages and working conditions, change can happen. Over half a million Wal-Mart workers will be receiving a wage increase. If everyone is willing to stand together, this same type of change can occur in every workplace.

CEO Reduces Own Pay, Raises Workers’ Wages

By Paul Henry, Esq., PGO Field Representative

Dan Price, CEO and Founder of the credit card processing company Gravity Payments, has taken drastic steps to help out his employees. While so many employers out there are looking to “cut costs” to increase profits, Mr. Price has chosen to look at the long term happiness of his employees rather than profit. The federal minimum wage is \$7.25 an hour, which amounts to poverty wages. Inspired by the Fight for \$15 campaign, Mr. Price began to research how employees’ wages affected their happiness.

Even though the average salary for the workers at Gravity was \$48,000 a year, Mr. Price increased the minimum wage for his workers to \$70,000 a year. A recent study found that workers who earned at least \$75,000 a year had a better sense of self and better emotional well-being. One might ask, how did he pay for this? He did so by reducing his former salary of one million dollars to the \$70,000 everyone else was earning.

Corporate America could take a lesson from Mr. Price. In the same study Mr. Price utilized in determining to increase his employees’ wages, it also stated that happiness did not really increase if someone made more than \$75,000. Once he determined that he could live comfortably on less than the million a year he had been receiving, it turned out tons of money did not really buy happiness. Hopefully the bosses out there take note; the greater the disparity in pay between the workers and the bosses, the less likely the workers will be happy.