ROAD TO THE WHITE HOUSE

- Preserve Medicare
- Protect Retirement
- Employee Free Choice Act

Map of the United States with major cities and states highlighted.
Throughout America, the winds of political change blow stronger each and every day. Record voter turnout in Democratic primaries and caucuses across the country, unprecedented numbers of first-time voters and a wave of energized young people eager to participate in the political process are clear signs that the American people have had enough.

We are ready to elect new political leadership this November; leadership that will chart a bold new course for our country after eight years of greed, corruption and economic and foreign policy failure.

With this new political leadership comes the opportunity for the enactment of a powerful piece of legislation that would usher in an era of robust growth in the ranks of organized labor not seen in this country for 70 years.

The Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) will dramatically shift the balance of power in organizing campaigns from employers to workers. (See pages 8-9 for a full discussion of the legislation.)

Enactment of EFCA means that the tens of millions of American workers who want to join a union can do so without fear of being intimidated, threatened, or illegally fired.

Enactment of EFCA means that the BCTGM will be able to expand our membership significantly, giving us greater union density across our industries, and with it the power to negotiate even stronger contracts and further advance the rights and interests of our members.

Enactment of EFCA means a larger, stronger labor movement that will exert greater influence in Washington over the most important legislative matters of our times such as trade, energy, health care and pension policies.

In short, the Employee Free Choice Act will fundamentally alter the American workplace and economy for the better and take its place alongside the monumental labor, civil and human rights legislation in our nation’s history. It will take American labor law out of the dark ages and provide American workers with the same rights and protections as workers in virtually every industrialized country in the world.

But enactment of EFCA will not be easy. Employer and anti-union organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, American Bakers Association and the National Right to Work (for Less) Committee will do everything possible to stop the Employee Free Choice Act from becoming law.

They know what this legislation means for empowering workers and are prepared to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on Washington lobbyists and television, radio and newspaper advertisements to influence Congress. In fact, they have already started running misleading and deceitful television ads in a number of states in preparation for the battle next year.

For this reason, the BCTGM has joined with the AFL-CIO in a Million-Member Mobilization for the Employee Free Choice Act. Unions participating in this historic grassroots mobilization have committed to seeing that at least 10 percent of their members complete and return postcards such as the one inserted into this issue of the BCTGM News. The cards will be presented to the new Congress and new President in January of 2009.

This Mobilization will be labor’s answer to the employers’ campaign of lies and deception against the legislation. It will be a show of worker solidarity that every member of Congress must heed.

The Million Member Mobilization provides every BCTGM member with the opportunity to be a part of shaping the very future of the labor movement. I urge you to join this history-making labor action. Please fill out the EFCA postcard and return it to the BCTGM Headquarters so that your voice for change can be heard, loud and clear.

Frank Hurt
BCTGM International President
BCTGM members were among hundreds of union members to participate in the biggest union mobilization yet in the 2008 political season with the first round of door-to-door walks, part of the AFL-CIO Labor 2008 political mobilization program.

Union volunteers in more than 20 states shared information on key working family issues, like health care and the economy, reaching thousands of union members in states such as Kentucky, Florida, Indiana, New Hampshire, Colorado, Minnesota, Pennsylvania and Ohio. The walks will continue in coming months as millions of union members mobilize to elect a working family-friendly president and Congress.

In these early union member-to-member walks, union volunteers are focusing on health care, especially the health care plan proposed by Arizona Sen. John McCain, the presumptive Republican nominee. His plan would undermine existing health care coverage, creating a new tax on health care and pushing people into the private market to deal with insurance companies on their own. It wouldn’t cut costs or cover more people.

Gill Bush, a BCTGM Local 103 (Orlando, Fla.) member and chief shop steward, was one of hundreds of volunteers who hit the streets and knocked on doors on May 17 in Jacksonville, Fla.

“I’m here today to get out the vote, and to get other workers to support a candidate who supports our issues, including affordable health care,” said Bush.

The AFL-CIO Labor 2008 political program is set to become the largest union political mobilization in history, and union member-to-member contact, like the May labor walks, is the most effective way to mobilize and educate working families. Through door-to-door walks, worksite visits, phone banks and mail, thousands of union volunteers will reach out to millions of union members.

“The union vote will be crucial in electing the next president, and it’s essential to educate union members and their families about the issues that affect them and where the candidates stand,” notes BCTGM International President Frank Hurt.

“With an economic crisis hitting working families around the country, issues like trade, housing, jobs and health care will move voters—and candidates—to respond to these concerns,” Hurt concludes.
Local Union leaders from across North America gathered at the George Meany Center for Labor Studies, in Silver Spring, Md. for an intensive one week educational conference. The conference, administered by the BCTGM Research & Education Department, focused on developing the leadership skills of newly elected local union officers. According to BCTGM International President Frank Hurt, the purpose of the training is to ensure that BCTGM local leaders represent their members to the best of their abilities. “We give them the tools to negotiate great contracts, organize new members and administer their local union; once they get back to their Locals it is up to them to put it into action,” notes Hurt.

The daily seminars, made up of workshops, presentations, and guest speakers, focused on local union management, organizing, workplace health & safety, arbitrations, and preparing for negotiations. There was also a special session on the financial record-keeping responsibilities for the financial secretaries.

From the first day of the conference, the local union officers were encouraged to share their own situations with the group and learn from the experiences of others. This was especially important when it came to discussing organizing strategies for both past and future campaigns. The participants agreed that this information-sharing was an invaluable part of the overall experience.

On the last evening of the conference, the members presented Hurt with a generous donation to the BCTGM-PAC fund.
How Does the BCTGM Support Working Families?

Steve Silvey  
Financial Secretary  
Local 342 (Bloomington, Ill.)

The BCTGM supports working families through organization, representation, education and political action. Since our inception, we have increased our standard of living. Everyday, something is going to arise that is going to affect somebody’s life somewhere. The BCTGM continues to fight for all working families from the International level, all the way down to the Local level.

Betty Trout  
Financial Secretary  
Local 387G (Lancaster, Pa.)

By keeping jobs here and not overseas; seeing that all people are given fair wages for the jobs they do. To make sure pensions, insurance, etc. are kept on level with others. To have fair representation in disputes.

Bob Herring  
President  
Local 178G (Fremont, Neb.)

I feel it allows us to feel secure by knowing the BCTGM will always continue to monitor laws and union rights which allows us to enjoy our families at or away from work.

Oscar Hernandez  
Business Agent  
Local 24 (Redwood City, Calif.)

It gives families working in the industry a chance at a better standard of living by offering higher wages, affordable health care and a retirement pension plan.

Kevin Wiegers  
President  
Local 252 (Calgary, Alb.)

Being an institution and force in our society devoted to enhancing and preserving a person’s dignity and life through benefits, wages, and pensions.

Georgene Barragan  
Business Agent  
Local 114 (Portland, Ore.)

Better wages and affordable healthcare for even the smallest emergency.
BCTGM Local 1 (Chicago) successfully negotiated a new five year contract with Tootsie Roll Industries that will run through 2012. The deal affects more than 500 BCTGM members at the Chicago facility.

The new contract features a wage increase of $2.05 over the course of the deal, along with increases in the weekly accident and sickness benefit and the life insurance benefit. Of particular importance to the membership was the substantial rise in the company’s pension contribution.

According to former Local 1 President Jethro Head, the local bargaining committee conducted a thorough outreach and educational effort to negotiate a contract that reflected the concerns of the membership. “Our members saw the value in making pension improvements as the number one issue; the whole negotiations came down to this,” said Head.

The negotiating committee, led by Region Three Vice President Steve Bertelli, included Head, then Local 1 President; Sam Garcia, Area Steward; Joe Probst, Area Steward; Angel Ochoa, Chief Trustee/Executive Board/Chief Steward; Larry Willis, Area Steward.

Local 1 has represented the workers at Tootsie Roll since 1969.

Death of AFGM President Willis

Robert W. Willis, retired International President of the American Federation of Grain Millers (AFGM), passed away February 12. He was 73.

Willis began his career at the Kellogg Company in 1954 working in the packing rooms. In the early 1960s, he became a union steward and soon after was placed on the executive board of Local 3 Grain Millers Union. He became an international representative for the AFGM and later became a vice president. He served as the executive vice president and eventually was elected to General President of the International Union.

In 1980, Willis was among Kellogg personnel to testify before a Senate panel in the anti-trust suit brought against the cereal manufacturer and as a result, the suit was dropped.

Hurt Appoints Region 3 International Representative

BCTGM International President Frank Hurt is pleased to announce the appointment of Jethro Head as a Region 3 International Representative. Head, the former President of BCTGM Local 1 (Chicago), has been a member of the union for 34 years.

Head, 54, is a native of East St. Louis, Ill. He began his career with the union at Curtiss Candy Company in February 1974. He worked in the plant until he was elected President of Local 552 in July 1984. He served as the local’s president until June 1, 1999 when he became Vice President of Local 1 upon a merger of Local 552 into Local 1. Head became President of Local 1 on January 1, 2000, a position he served proudly until his recent appointment to International Representative. Additionally, Head has served as Vice President of the Illinois State AFL-CIO since January 2000.

He served in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserves from 1974 to 1980 and graduated from Roosevelt University.

“We are very proud to welcome Jethro to our International Staff," says Hurt. “His history of hard work and dedication to workers and this union will undoubtedly benefit the union members of Region Three. He is a skilled negotiator, knowledgeable organizer and his dedication to the trade union movement is reflected in all that he accomplishes.”
Guest Column

Make the Economy Work for Working Americans

By Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.)

For the last eight years, the American economy has been heading in the wrong direction. Prices for food, gasoline and health care have skyrocketed—but the median income of American households has gone down by nearly $1,000. The productivity of the average worker has gone up by more than 17 percent, but the average paycheck has gone up by only pennies.

We’ve had economic policy written for the rich and powerful, and working families have been paying the price.

I was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2006 because people wanted change. And we’ve made some important changes since a new majority took control in Congress. We passed the first minimum-wage increase in a decade. We increased funding for tuition assistance to make a college education more affordable for middle-class families.

As a Senator who represents a state with thousands of employees in the sugar and grain-milling industries, I’ve also worked to strengthen our food and agriculture economy. I still remember visiting American Crystal Sugar back in 2006 and talking with members of the BCTGM. So as a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I worked hard on a new Farm Bill that will strengthen and modernize the federal safety net for agriculture, the sugar industry and the thousands of jobs they support.

These steps show that, with the right values and the right commitment, we can have an economy that works for average working people.

I’m proud of these achievements, but they are just a down payment on the changes our country needs.

Last year we tried to pass legislation to give American workers in the family car. In recent weeks, a number of energy industry experts have testified in Congress that ordinary market fundamentals cannot explain the skyrocketing cost of oil, and that rampant market speculation has to be one of the causes. So we’re working on legislation that would crack down on speculators and close loopholes that allow market manipulation. We need to make sure that the marketplace is working for consumers, not against them. We also need long-term solutions to reduce our country’s dependence on foreign oil. We should be investing in the farmers and workers of our country, not the oil princes of the Middle East.

Finally, we need tax and budget policies that are fair to all Americans. The current Administration has run up the federal deficit year after year, to the point where $1 out of every $12 of our tax dollars now goes to pay interest on the federal debt. That’s unacceptable. If we roll back the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, we can cut the federal deficit—and raise the revenue we need to rebuild our country’s infrastructure and invest in the workforce of the future.

America was built on the values of hard work and fair play. Americans are working plenty hard. It’s time the economy worked for them.

Amy Klobuchar represents Minnesota in the U.S. Senate.
America's working people are struggling to make ends meet and our middle class is disappearing. The best opportunity working people have to get ahead economically is by uniting to bargain with their employers for better wages and benefits. Recent research has shown that some 60 million U.S. workers would join a union if they could.

But the current system for forming unions and bargaining is broken. Every day, corporations deny workers the freedom to decide for themselves whether to form unions to bargain for a better life. They routinely intimidate, harass, coerce and even fire workers who try to form unions and bargain for economic well-being.

The Employee Free Choice Act (H.R. 800, S. 1041), supported by a bipartisan coalition in Congress, would level the playing field for workers and employers and help rebuild America's middle class. It would restore workers' freedom to choose a union by:

- Strengthening penalties for companies that illegally coerce or intimidate employees in an effort to prevent them from forming a union;
- Bringing in a neutral third party to settle a contract when a company and a newly certified union cannot agree on a contract after three months;
- Establishing majority sign-up, meaning that if a majority of the employees sign union authorization cards, validated by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), a company must recognize the union.

What's wrong with the current law?

The National Labor Relations Act states: “Employees shall have to the right to self organization to form, join, or assist labor organizations...” It was designed to protect employee choice on whether to form unions, but it has been turned upside down.

Employers have turned the NLRB election process into management-controlled balloting—the employer has all the power, controls the information workers can receive and routinely poisons the process by intimidating, harassing, coerces and even firing people who try to organize unions. On top of that, the law’s penalties are so insignificant that many companies treat them as just another cost of doing business. By the time employees vote in an NLRB election, if they can get to that point, a free and fair choice isn't an option. Even in the voting location, workers do not have a free choice after being browbeaten by supervisors to oppose the union or being told they may lose their jobs and livelihoods if they vote for the union.

Do so-called secret ballot elections allow employees a free and fair opportunity to make their own decisions about unions?

No. By the time employees get to vote, the environment has been so poisoned that free and fair choice isn't an option. People call the current NLRB election system a secret ballot election—but in fact it's not like any democratic election held anywhere else in our society. No employee has free choice after being browbeaten by a supervisor to oppose the union or being told they may lose their job and livelihood if workers vote for the union.

Until working people can exercise a free choice, they will continue to lose power in our country, living standards will continue to suffer and our middle class will continue to decline. Workers need a real choice. They don't have it now.
Why is majority sign-up a better way to protect employees’ free choice?

Majority sign-up minimizes workplace conflict. This process avoids coercion and harassment of employees and eliminates some of the delays that frustrate workers’ efforts to form unions. Majority sign-up has been shown to reduce conflict, coercion and harassment as well as the delays, business disruptions and legal costs associated with the NLRB “election” process.

Majority sign-up is democratic. Under majority sign-up, a union is formed only if a majority of all employees signs written authorization forms. Employees vote to have the union represent them by signing the forms. Any employee who does not sign a written authorization form is presumed not to support union representation.

Are workers more likely to be coerced to sign cards under majority sign-up, as opponents say?

No. In fact, academic studies show that workers who organize under majority sign-up feel less pressure from co-workers to support the union than workers who organize under the NLRB election process. Workers who vote by majority sign-up also report far less pressure or coercion from management to oppose the union than workers who go through NLRB elections. In addition, it is illegal for anyone to coerce employees to sign a union authorization card. Any person who breaks the law will be subject to penalties under the Employee Free Choice Act.

Once a majority of workers indicates they want a union by signing cards, the company should not be able to drag the process out for months as they can under a management-controlled election process. The will of the majority should be recognized.

Who supports the Employee Free Choice Act?

The Employee Free Choice Act has the support of hundreds of members of Congress of both parties, academics and historians, civil and human rights organizations such as the NAACP and Human Rights Watch, most major faith denominations and 69 percent of the American public. (For a detailed list of supporters, visit www.EmployeeFreeChoiceAct.org.)

Who Opposes the Employee Free Choice Act?

Corporate front groups are waging a major campaign to stop the Employee Free Choice Act (H.R. 800). They do not want workers to have the freedom to choose for themselves whether to bargain through unions for better wages, benefits and working conditions. The anti-union network includes discredited groups such as the Center for Union Facts, led by lobbyist Richard Berman, who is infamous for fighting against drunk driving laws and consumer and health protections, and the National Right to Work Committee and Foundation, the country’s oldest organization dedicated exclusively to destroying unions.

Why Workers Need the Freedom to Form Unions and Bargain

Joining together in an union to bargain for better wages, benefits and working conditions is the best opportunity working people have to get ahead.

Today, good jobs are vanishing and health care coverage and retirement security are slipping out of reach. Only 38 percent of the public says their families are getting ahead financially and less than a quarter believes the next generation will be better off.

But workers who belong to unions earn 30 percent more than nonunion workers. They are 62 percent more likely to have employer-provided health coverage and four times more likely to have pensions.

All workers should have the freedom to decide for themselves whether to form unions to bargain for a better life.
While few worker-friendly laws have been enacted during the Bush Administration, BCTGM members throughout the U.S. have generously supported policy makers who continue to fight for working families. Pictured here are BCTGM representatives presenting pro-union Members of Congress with BCTGM-PAC donations.

In the North Carolina Senate Race, the BCTGM has endorsed Democratic nominee Kay Hagan, a state senator from Greensboro, N.C., who is challenging Republican Sen. Elizabeth Dole. Pictured here presenting Hagan with a BCTGM-PAC donation is (from left) Local 229T (Concord, N.C.) Financial Secretary-Treasurer Cynthia Hallman, Local 229T President Robert Hines, Hagan, and Local 317 (Greensboro, N.C.) President Tony Pegram.

U.S. Representative John Yarmuth represents Kentucky’s 3rd Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives. As a member of the Education and Labor Committee, Rep. Yarmuth is committed to providing a safe and profitable working environment for America’s workers. Pictured here presenting Yarmuth (right) with a BCTGM-PAC donation is International Representative Bill Daunhauer.

U.S. Representative Patrick Murphy, who represents the 8th Congressional District of Pennsylvania, is the first and only Iraq war veteran elected to Congress. Local 492 (Philadelphia) President Ed Rodgers (left) and Local 492 Nabisco Shop Chairman John Lazar (right) present Congressman Murphy with a BCTGM-PAC donation to aid in his re-election campaign.

First elected to Congress in 1998, Rep. Brian Baird represents the 3rd Congressional District of Washington State. Congressman Baird has a long history of supporting labor and the issues important to the BCTGM. Pictured here presenting Baird (center) with a BCTGM-PAC donation to aid in his re-election campaign is Local 364 (Portland, Ore.) Secretary-Treasurer Victor Weekes (left) and Local 364 Trustee Chairman John Murphy.

Local 1 (Chicago) President Donald Woods (left) presents Jill Morganthaler with a BCTGM-PAC donation. Morganthaler is the Democratic Party’s nominee for the U.S. House of Representatives for Illinois’ 6th Congressional District in the upcoming General Election.

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“His victory has sent a political thunderbolt across America tonight. It is yet another rejection of the House Republican agenda, the Bush Administration's misguided policies, and John McCain’s campaign for a third Bush term.”
—DCCC chairman Chris Van Hollen, on the significance of Travis Childers, a Democrat, winning a House seat in a special election in staunchly conservative northern Mississippi.

“The next president—President Obama or whoever—has to listen to workers’ demands!”
—Stewart Acuff, AFL-CIO Organizing Director, addressing the Jobs with Justice national conference and speaking of the importance of the Employee free Choice Act.

“A college degree has become less of a guarantee of receiving health and retirement benefits on the job. Over the last recession and recovery, college graduates in entry-level jobs became less likely to receive employer-provided health insurance and pension coverage.”
—from a report by Lawrence Mishel and Elise Gould, Economic Policy Institute, on the lack of benefits college-educated workers are receiving when they join the workplace.

“Uninsured Americans are sicker and die earlier than those who have health insurance.”
—Ron Pollack, executive director of Families USA.

“By passing this legislation today, Congress is taking the first step toward doing what OSHA should have done years ago.”
—Representative George Miller, D-Calif., after the House of Representatives passed the Worker Protection against Combustible Dust Explosions and Fires Act (H.R. 5522) that would compel OSHA to issue rules regulating combustible industrial dusts.
The BCTGM International proudly announces the winners of the 2008 BCTGM International Scholarship Program. Ten $1,000 one-time awards were presented to the below students. The winners were chosen from a total of 224 applicants from the U.S. and Canada.

The BCTGM International Scholarship Program is an example of the union’s commitment to higher education at a time when college costs continue to soar out of reach for many working families. Since 1962, the International has helped fulfill the educational dreams of students representing BCTGM families across North America.

**Stephanie Lau**, daughter of Chen Po Lau, member of BCTGM Local 125 (Oakland, Calif.) employed at Svenhard’s Swedish Bakery. Stephanie will attend the University of California.

**Tin Nguyen**, son of An Thi Nguyen, member of BCTGM Local 118 (Washington, D.C.) employed at Giant Food. Tin will attend the University of Virginia.

**Emily Gong**, daughter of Alex Gong, member of BCTGM Local 37 (Los Angeles) employed at Bimbo Bakery. Emily will attend the University of California.

**Sarah Piekarski**, daughter of Bruce Piekarski, member of BCTGM Local 125 (Los Angeles) employed at General Mills. Sarah will attend the University of Illinois.

**Alex Lu**, son of Jeanne Hua, member of BCTGM Local 125 (Oakland, Calif.) employed at See’s Candies. Alex will attend the University of California.

**Richard Duong**, son of Ricky Duong, member of BCTGM Local 229T (Concord, N.C.) employed at Philip Morris USA. Richard will attend the University of North Carolina.

**Guillaume Schmidt**, son of Alain Schmidt, member of BCTGM Local 550 (LaChine, Que.) employed at Humpty Dumpty Ltd. Guillaume will attend l’Université des Technologies Supérieures (Superior Technology University).

**Isaac Gobern**, member and Business Agent of BCTGM Local 42 (Atlanta), will attend the National Labor College.

**Elece Mitchell**, member of BCTGM Local 6 (Philadelphia) will attend the University of Shippensburg.

**Elaine Romero**, member of BCTGM Local 116 (Syracuse, N.Y.) will attend Bryant & Stratton College.
A new report by the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) casts a critical eye on the way temporary foreign workers (TFW's) are used in the province of Alberta. The AFL released the report, *Temporary Foreign Workers: Alberta’s Disposable Workforce* because of growing concern about the working and living conditions of the men and women that have been brought to Canada from as far away as Asia, to work on construction sites, in wholesale bakeries, and in the service industry.

Over the past five years, Canada’s federal government has expanded the Temporary Foreign Worker program in response to demands from provinces and large employers, both of whom claim there is a critical labour shortage in the country. Ottawa issued 106,750 temporary foreign worker permits in 2006, and 103,000 were issued within the first nine months of 2007. That number is expected to grow dramatically because of various measures introduced by the Harper government.

The federal program used to be centered on seasonal and agricultural workers but now includes both skilled and unskilled workers. Over the past several years, unions affiliated with the AFL, including the BCTGM, began raising concerns about the welfare of these temporary workers.

“The program is inherently flawed as workers under this program have fewer rights than immigrants who enter Canada through other streams,” states the Report. “TFW’s who find themselves in difficult situations really have no where to turn.”

The Report reveals several recurring problems with the TFW program:

- Low Wages and poor working conditions
- Unscrupulous Brokers
- Inadequate Housing
- Lack of Rights Enforcement
- Convoluted Bureaucracy

Many TFW’s are unwilling to complain, for fear they will lose their Canadian employment and be returned to their country of origin. In addition, many of these workers are unaware of their provincial or federal legal protections, and therefore succumb to the intimidation and exploitation of their Canadian employers.

Other provinces are also addressing the issue. On March 25, the Manitoba Federation of Labour presented a brief to the Manitoba government outlining recommended amendments that are necessary to make the Employment Services Act more responsive to the needs of Temporary Foreign Workers.

In response, the Manitoba government is drafting a Letter of Understanding that would strengthen protections for temporary foreign workers. According to Nancy Allen, Manitoba's Minister of Labour and Immigration, the Letter of Understanding would strengthen safe working conditions and fulfilling terms of employment.
May Day
May 1st—May Day or International Workers’ Day—is a celebration of the social and economic achievements of the international labor movement. In the U.S., May Day is a commemoration of the Haymarket Massacre in Chicago in 1886 when Chicago police fired on workers during a general strike for the eight hour day, killing a dozen demonstrators. Throughout the world, May Day commonly sees organized street demonstrations by millions of working people and their labor unions. In most European countries, May Day is an official holiday.

Turn Around America
L. 42 (Atlanta) Bus. Agt. Isaac Gobern speaks during the Turn Around America health care forum. Panelists included Georgia Congressmen John Lewis, Hank Johnson, and David Scott. Gobern was chosen to be the labor leader panelist to explain to the elected officials how the current health care crisis is a burden to union members—specifically during contract negotiations.

Shop Stewards Train
In Quebec City, BCTGM Local 261T (Quebec City) shop stewards recently met to upgrade their skills. Pictured here (from left to right) are members Pierre Paquet, Stephan Wittke, BCTGM Intl. Rep. Daniel Rondou, Nicolas Comeau and Pierre Lacroit.

295 Years of Membership
BCTGM Local 2T members employed by Swisher Tobacco in Wheeling, West Va. have a long, proud union history. Recently, ten union members were presented with union pins and certificates honoring their long history of union dedication. Pictured here with their service awards is (back row, left to right) Michael Sovinsky (25), Arlie Crowe (40), John Hill (25), Stephen Leek (25), Joseph Urbanek (40), Intl. Rep. Bill Daunhauer, (front row, left to right) Virginia Conner (40), Richard Dillon (25) and Mark Kaminski (25). Not pictured is Daniel Manners (25) and Monte Casino (25).
Program Proves the Union Difference for New BCTGM Member

When Albert Aguirre of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco, and Grain Millers (BCTGM) Local 1 changed jobs last year, he went from a non-union candy factory outside Chicago to a union plant in the same area.

The improved pay, benefits and job security were no surprise to this skilled mechanics operator—that’s just what he expected from a union. But what he wasn’t expecting was help in buying his first home.

“My Chase representative was a family friend,” Aguirre of Steger, IL, says. “And at that point I didn’t even know about the union mortgage program. But he knew I was union now, and one day he told me there was a program I really needed to find out about.”

What Aguirre learned was that the Union Plus Mortgage Program, which is available to BCTGM members as well as their parents and children, offered him protection in the event of a strike, layoff or lockout. And the low down payment and cap on fees would make it easier for him to get into a new home sooner.

Since the program began, BCTGM members have saved almost $185,000 in fees.

The timing was perfect. Aguirre, his girlfriend Angela Giudic, and their daughters Isabelle and Eden were sharing an apartment and their lease was almost up. “Rent was really costing us a lot of money,” Aguirre says. And so he thought, “Why don’t we spend a little more and have something we can really call our own?”

After some searching they found just the home of their dreams: a brick four-bedroom ranch with a finished basement, two bathrooms, a swimming pool and hot tub, and a yard so big that Aguirre bought a small tractor just for cutting the grass. Aguirre remembers it was all a little overwhelming at first. “I’ve never had so much responsibility,” he says. But now he’s starting to get used to it and loves being a homeowner.

Aguirre will be sure to tell his co-workers about the BCTGM mortgage program. “We’re union, and it’s a really good program—why wouldn’t you check it out?” says Aguirre.

One thing that made the first few months of homeownership a little easier was their “Welcome to Your First Home” Award. A few weeks before Thanksgiving, he and Angela opened a package from Union Plus and were delighted to discover $500 in gift cards to their local union grocery store.

“That award,” Aguirre says, “paid for our Thanksgiving dinner!”

The Union Plus Mortgage Program, provided by Chase, offers a full-range of mortgage products. Program benefits include a cap on fees and special payment assistance in the event of unemployment, disability, strike or lockout. These unique benefits—not offered by any other mortgage—have provided more than $3.3 million to help union families since the program’s inception. BCTGM members have closed over $33.5 million in homes with the union mortgage program.

To learn more about the Union Plus Mortgage Program, call 1-800-848-6466 or visit www.UnionPlus.org/Mortgage to find a local office.

5 Tips to Keep Your Wits (and Your Home)

The home mortgage crisis has affected millions of working families. Here are five strategies you can use to protect your home.

• **Be proactive.** If you have an adjustable rate mortgage (ARM), call your lender now to find out when your rate will adjust, by how much, and how often this can happen. If your rate has already gone up and you may not be able to make your payment, contact your lender and ask if they will work out a plan that works for you.

• **Worried you’re at risk of losing your home?** Call the Union Plus Save My Home Hotline at 1-866-490-5361 for free, confidential advice from HUD-certified housing counselors. Face-to-face counseling is also available at more than 100 local offices in 22 states and the District of Columbia.

• **The state you’re in.** Many states have been moving faster than the federal government in offering assistance to homeowners in crisis. Contact your state government and ask what programs may be available.

• **Give yourself credit.** If your mortgage situation is part of an overall credit problem, call 1-877-733-1745 to schedule a free credit counseling session.

• **Go union.** The Union Plus Mortgage Program offers low closing costs and other benefits for union members and families. It’s the only program in the country with the Mortgage Assistance Program, which can cover your mortgage payment in the event of disability, strike, lockout or layoff. Call 1-800-848-6466.
With your help, the unions of the AFL-CIO will present the new president and Congress with one million signatures urging them to enact the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA).

Please fill out the postcard inserted within this publication to have your voice heard!

Visit www.bctgm.org for more information on the EFCA and the launch of the electronic campaign in June.

The Employee Free Choice Act will:

- Strengthen penalties against companies that coerce or intimidate employees trying to form unions and bargain.
- Establish mediation and binding arbitration when the employer and workers cannot agree on a first contract, and
- Enable employees to form unions when a majority signs authorization cards.