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# NEWS SERVICE

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**Tell Congress: 'Hands Off the Ergonomics Standard!'**

## Attack on Ergonomics Rules Intensifies

**Opponents of ergonomics protections are expected to introduce legislation to kill OSHA's new ergonomics standard very soon. In a blitzkrieg-like move, they plan to push for a quick and decisive vote in the Senate the week of March 5 or March 12. Action is needed NOW to save this important worker protection. Call your senators toll-free at 800-393-1082 and use the talking points below to urge them to oppose legislation to kill ergonomics protections for workers.**

Ten years in the making, OSHA's new ergonomics standard is the most important worker safety action developed in the agency's history, preventing hundreds of thousands of serious injuries each year. But opponents in the business community and Congress are trying to repeal this important protection using the Congressional Review Act (CRA). **If the CRA "Resolution of Disapproval" passes, the new ergonomics standard will be dead, probably forever.**

Probable Senate sponsors of the CRA resolution are **Mike Enzi** (R-WY), **Don Nickles** (R-OK) and **Kit Bond** (R-MO); the likely House sponsors are **Tom DeLay** (R-TX), **Henry Bonilla** (R-TX), **Cass Ballenger** (R-NC), **Roy Blount** (R-MO) and **Anne Northup** (R-KY).

**APWU members' calls to their senators and representatives are urgently needed.** The immediate goal for labor is to line up 51 Senate votes. On the vote last year to delay the standard, unions lost the votes of Sens. **John Breau** (D-LA), **Ernest Hollings** (D-SC) and **Blanche Lambert Lincoln** (D-AR), and gained the vote of Sen. **Arlen Specter** (R-PA).

We must mobilize immediately. Here's what you can do:

Write, call, fax or e-mail your senators and congressional representatives **NOW** and urge them to oppose any legislation to overturn the new OSHA ergonomics standard.

### Talking Points

Here's why the OSHA ergonomics standard is so important to workers and should be maintained:

- Ergonomic injuries and illnesses are the nation's

biggest workplace safety and health problem, causing more than 600,000 serious workplace injuries and costing \$45-\$50 billion each year.

- The 2001 National Academy of Sciences/Institute of Medicine report on work-related MSDs strongly supports the science behind the ergonomics standard.

- OSHA's ergonomics standard is a flexible measure that is based on sound science and good employer practices.

- The new ergonomics standard will prevent hundreds of thousands of crippling workplace injuries each year and result in significant cost savings for employers and workers.

- The ergonomics standard was 10 years in the making and was long overdue. The standard was the result of a lengthy and extensive rule-making process, including nine weeks of public hearings, over 1,000 witnesses, and more than 7,000 written comments.

- Efforts to repeal the ergonomics standard under the Congressional Review Act are an extremist action and should be strongly opposed. If successful, OSHA would be barred from issuing similar safeguards to protect workers from the nation's biggest job safety problem. Hundreds of thousands of workers would be needlessly injured and crippled each year.

- If Congress or the Bush Administration wants to change the standard, they can do so using normal regulatory procedures that allow for full public comment and a decision based on evidence and facts, not through a political act that would totally wipe out these protections forever.

**Executive Orders Contradict Administration's Pledges**

## Bush Targets Organized Labor

**President George W. Bush, despite having campaigned as a "uniter, not a divider," recently signed four executive orders directly targeting organized labor. In addition, Bush has suspended for six months the Contractor Responsibility Rule, which was finalized in December, 2000.**

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney issued a statement on behalf of the entire labor movement when the Bush executive orders were signed. Excerpts from his statement follow:

"This action comes just 48 hours after Bush's Secretary of Labor promised to work with our leadership and breeches an understanding with the White House Chief of Staff to have discussions with us on issues whether we are in agreement or not. This violates the President's own public pledges to consult widely, promote civility and 'change the tone' in Washington.

### Union Dues and Fees

"This executive order requires government contractors to post notices stating that employees cannot be required to become union members in order to retain their jobs and that those who do not join the union may object to paying the portion of agency fees that are not related to collective bargaining. Contractors that fail to comply can be barred from bidding on or keeping their government contracts.

". . . If workers need to be further informed of their rights, their right to organize deserves first priority—but the Bush order is silent about that.

### Project Labor Agreements

"This executive order forbids agencies from requiring bidders on federal construction projects to agree to enter into agreements with a labor organization for the work, effectively barring the government from using project labor agreements.

"The federal government and the states have successfully built numerous public buildings and facilities under project labor agreements for many decades because they promote efficiency and economy. Agreements typically set terms and conditions of employment on complex projects and guarantee the orderly resolution of any labor disputes to prevent strikes and lockouts. They enable all contractors to bid on equal terms, regardless of whether their workers have ever been organized. This new executive order undermines sensible procurement policy, reduces construction options and will increase government construction costs.

### Displacement of Qualified Workers

"This executive order rescinds a 1994 executive

order requiring building service contractors in federal buildings that have taken over work previously performed by another contractor to offer continued employment in the same jobs to qualified employees of the displaced contractor. This order deprives service employees on federal work sites of job security when the federal government changes contractors. These workers are usually low-paid, and even brief periods of unemployment can be catastrophic for their families. There is simply no justification for eliminating this important protection.

### Federal Sector Labor-Management Partnership

"This order rescinds a 1993 executive order that required federal agencies to confer with their employees' representatives over such topics as staffing levels and work techniques, and established the National Partnership Council to improve labor-management relations throughout the federal government.

"This order immediately abolishes labor-management relations systems that serve the federal government and hundreds of thousands of federal workers as well. The flexible approach to resolving workplace issues represented by these programs reflects a steady development in federal personnel relations that began in the Nixon Administration. Now, President Bush has unceremoniously and inexplicably ended these initiatives, effectively telling his own employees that they are unrespected and unimportant."

### Contractor Responsibility Rule Suspended

In yet another direct attack, Bush delayed implementation of the Contractor Responsibility Rule, also known as the Federal Acquisition Rule, for six months. Democratic Senators **Ted Kennedy** (D-MA), **Joseph Lieberman** (D-CT), and **Richard Durbin** (D-IL) issued a joint letter blasting the decision. They wrote:

"The Contractor Responsibility Rule, which was proposed in July 1999 and finalized in December 2000, requires that to qualify for a government contract, a business must have a record of satisfactory compliance with federal laws, including those protecting public health workers, consumers, civil rights and the environment. Recent [Bush] Administration attempts to grant a six-month reprieve from the obligations of this rule are contrary to the public interest and according to a legal memorandum issued by the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, are likely unlawful. Taxpayer-funded government contracts should go to companies that obey the law, not to chronic lawbreakers."

# Wrong Campaign Reform Could Gag Workers' Voices

Several campaign finance reform bills have been introduced in the 107th Congress. Once these bills reach the floor of the Senate, anti-union forces will likely attempt to attach amendments designed to weaken unions by hobbling unions' and workers' ability to participate in the political process.

The most notable campaign finance reform bill is S 27, by Sens. **John McCain** (R-AZ) and **Russ Feingold** (D-WI), which aims to ban "soft money" contributions to political parties. "Soft money" is a contribution to political parties for party-building efforts such as voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives. Soft money does not go directly to partisan candidates.

The American Postal Workers Union does not donate union dues money to political parties. APWU COPA, the political action committee of APWU members, uses voluntary contributions from members to give directly to the campaigns of supportive candidates and incumbents.

S 27 also would double, to \$10,000, the amount of money individuals may contribute to state political parties in federal elections.

Under McCain-Feingold, both unions and corporations would be prohibited from spending funds from their treasuries (such as union dues money) for issue advertisements that run 30 days prior to a primary election or 60 days prior to a general election, if a candidate's name is mentioned in the ad. Labor's voice is put at a greater disadvantage under this rule because anti-union groups such as the National Right to Work Committee would be exempt from it.

Corporations spent 15 times more money than unions did in the 2000 election campaign. This rule would make workers' voices even weaker.

Another provision in S 27 would codify the

Supreme Court's 1988 Beck decision. Under Beck, members who object to their union's spending on political or legislative activities, but who are required to belong to the union in order to hold their jobs, are entitled to have returned to them the portion of their dues unrelated to the costs of collective bargaining.

McCain-Feingold is expected to reach the Senate floor in March.

### Door Open for Troubling Amendments

Once S 27 is debated on the Senate floor, some critical amendments may be considered.

One is labeled "Paycheck Protection" by anti-union forces; but it is more accurately described as "Paycheck Deception." Under this dangerous plan, advocated by President George W. Bush and Senate Majority Leader **Trent Lott** (R-MS), unions would be required to obtain written approval from each member, every year, before dues from those members could be used for non-collective bargaining purposes, such as lobbying or other political activities.

This is an effort to further silence, and ultimately completely destroy, labor's voice. Similar proposals on ballot initiatives were defeated in California and Oregon in recent years.

The bill is not about leveling the playing field between corporate America and labor unions, as its proponents may claim. Labor is already outspent fifteen-to-one by corporations. This legislation is only about shutting up union members.

### Your Action Is Needed!

All APWU members are urged to immediately write, e-mail or phone their senators and representative to tell them to vote **NO** on any "Paycheck Protection" or "Paycheck Deception" amendments when campaign finance legislation is considered. The Capitol switchboard number is **202-224-3121**.

July 26-28, 2001, in Lake Buena Vista, FL

## 2001 Postal Press Association Conference

The 2001 APWU National Postal Press Association Editors' Conference will be held July 26-28 at the Hotel Royal Plaza located in the Orlando area at Lake Buena Vista, Florida. This biennial event is designed to help participants, whether novice or experienced, sharpen their communication skills.

In addition to the three days of skill-building workshops, an all-day pre-conference session, "Building the Local Union," will be presented on Wednesday, July 25.

### Hotel Information

The special room rate at the Hotel Royal Plaza is \$119 per day for single through quad occupancy, plus the current room tax of 11 percent. This room rate is in effect from July 22 through July 31. Room reservations can be made by calling the hotel at **800-248-7890**. Please specify that you are with the APWU National Postal Press Association.

For further information, contact Tony Carobine, PPA President, PO Box 888, Iron Mountain, MI 49801, or call 906-774-9599.

June 13-16, 2001, in Long Beach, CA

## APWU Deaf/Hard of Hearing National Conference

The APWU will host the Deaf/Hard of Hearing National Conference from Wednesday, June 13, 2001, through Saturday, June 16, 2001, at the Westin Long Beach Hotel, 333 East Ocean Boulevard, Long Beach, CA 90802.

The conference will convene with a general session on Wednesday, June 13 from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm, and will conclude with a reception/dinner on Saturday evening, June 16, 2001.

### Registration

To pre-register for this seminar, complete the registration form below and mail it to the Deaf/Hard of Hearing Task Force, American Postal Workers Union, at the address given. The pre-registration process ends May 13, 2001.

On-site registration will be held on Wednesday, June 13 from 1:00 pm to 7:00 pm, and on Thursday, June 14, from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm.

### Hotel Information

To make hotel reservations, contact the hotel directly at 562-436-3000 or 1-800-WESTIN1 and identify yourself as a participant of the American Postal Workers Union Deaf/Hard of Hearing National Conference. The room rate is \$119 for single or double occupancy, plus tax (currently 12 percent room

tax plus .045 percent California tourism tax), per room per night. Reservations should be made prior to May 13, 2001 to guarantee the negotiated rate.

The APWU Deaf/Hard of Hearing National Conference hotel block has a limited number of rooms; therefore, we suggest you make your hotel reservation early to guarantee the negotiated rate.

The hotel requires an advance deposit equal to one night's room and tax charges to hold all reservations. Deposits can be made by check, money order or any credit card accepted by the hotel. Hotel check-in is 3:00 pm; check-out is 12:00 noon.

Deposits are refundable if notice of cancellation is received by the hotel at least 72 hours prior to scheduled arrival, and if a cancellation number is obtained from the hotel at the time of cancellation.

### Travel Information

Long Beach is served by both the Los Angeles and Long Beach airports. Super Shuttle service from the Los Angeles Airport to the hotel currently costs \$14.50 per person each way. The trip takes approximately 30 minutes.

Taxi service is suggested from the Long Beach Airport to the hotel. The cost is approximately \$15.00 and the trip takes approximately 20 minutes.

### Pre-registration Form APWU Deaf/Hard of Hearing National Conference, June 13-16, 2001

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security No. \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Local \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

TDD# \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Dinner ticket order:** I wish to purchase \_\_\_\_\_ dinner tickets at \$40.00 per ticket. Enclosed is my check/money order in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_. Checks should be made payable to the American Postal Workers Union.

Send completed form to: **APWU Deaf/Hard of Hearing Task Force  
American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO  
1300 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005**

This form must be received no later than **May 13, 2001**.