



# AFL-CIO pushes job agenda

**N**ALC President Fred Rolando joined his fellow members of the AFL-CIO Executive Council at their annual mid-winter meeting last month for a review of the difficult issues confronting working people, especially persistent unemployment, health care reform and fixing labor laws to give workers the opportunity to form unions.

The gathering in Orlando, Florida, unanimously adopted a resolution calling for aggressive nationwide action by unions and the progressive movement to put America back to work and to defeat politicians who voted to deny aid for the unemployed and against job-creating legislation.

The council also called for strong actions against Wall Street firms that pay enormous bonuses but won't pay taxes, and against corporations that take the public's money and use it to downsize and outsource jobs. The federation planned more than 200 rallies and demonstrations in late March at branches and headquarters of the Big Six Wall Street banks—Bank of America, Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan Chase, Morgan Stanley and Wells Fargo/Wachovia—to drive home working people's anger.

"Mass unemployment is intolerable," the Council said. "Action is required. The AFL-CIO calls upon the entire labor movement—our affiliated unions, our state and local labor councils, the millions of members of Working America and our allies in communities and progressive movements across this country—to come together in a great effort to create and protect good jobs."

Rolando was on hand to hear Vice President Joe Biden defend the taxpayer bailout of the banking industry, saying that without the action, "We would have been in a flat-out depression and millions more would be out of jobs."

"Had we not done these unpopular things to stabilize the banking industry,

the auto industry, the housing sector, if we didn't have growth of nearly 6 percent, we wouldn't have any shot at (a recovery at) all," Biden said. "They're necessary preconditions to create genuine, renewed economic growth."

Biden got a rough reception from some of the labor leaders, who complained the administration has not done enough to create jobs and failed to deliver on many promised reforms, including the Employee Free Choice Act to facilitate union organizing campaigns. The measure was labor's top priority when President Obama took office with large Democratic majorities in both houses of Congress. Business associations, especially the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, waged a multimillion-dollar misinformation campaign against EFCA and the bill stalled in the Senate.

Also addressing the meeting was Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis, who reiterated that creating good jobs that provide affordable health care and retirement security is the Obama administration's top priority.

"I wake up every morning worried about the millions of Americans out of work, about the millions of Americans who have given up even looking for the jobs that aren't there," she told the Council. "None of us expected this and we did not create this crisis—but each and every one of us is called to do more."

Unemployment has remained stubbornly high, despite signs the recession has ended and the economy is picking up—around 9.7 percent, not counting discouraged workers who have given up looking. On March 17, the Senate gave final approval to a modest jobs bill, on a bipartisan 68-29 vote, and sent it to the White House for Obama's signature. It includes tax incentives for employers and extends federal highway projects and some other public works. ☐

## President Rolando joins call

Top: NALC President Fred Rolando meets Vice President Joe Biden during the AFL-CIO Executive Council meeting in Florida.

Below: Biden defends the administration's policies for creating job growth.

