



The blame game

Former Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey is reported to have once said: “We believe that to err is human. To blame it on someone else is politics.” All across this country, the political blame game for the worst recession in nearly 80 years and budget deficits at the local, state and federal levels is in full tilt. And lately the finger of blame is not being pointed at Wall Street where it belongs; it’s instead being pointed at Main Street.

Unions are now under attack from both the media and state legislators as the cause for all that fiscally ails us. But this time around isn’t just another sticks-and-stones occasion. Measures are now underway to limit—and even eliminate—the power of labor unions in many states.

Here are just a few examples of recently publicized state agendas:

- **Attacks on education**—Many governors have put “education reform” as their top priority, but the hidden agenda is to break teachers’ unions. Bills attacking teacher compensation are expected in at least seven states. Ohio Gov. John Kasich has also said publicly that he wants to ban strikes by teachers. Kasich said in a speech: “If they want to strike, they should be fired.”
- **Right to work**—Bills have already been filed in Indiana, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, Virginia and West Virginia. Bills are expected in Montana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. In addition, an initiative was filed in Michigan that would eliminate state employee collective bargaining.
- **Anti-prevailing wage**—Bills are expected in 14 states. An anti-prevailing wage bill has already been introduced in Missouri. The building trades will be targeted through these pieces of legislation.
- **Public sector**—The public sector continues to face vigorous attacks on pay, health care, pensions, contracting out and even the right to bargain collectively. Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker has called for the elimination of most public-sector collective bargaining. Ohio Gov. John Kasich plans to eliminate collective bargaining rights for 14,000 home health care and child care workers and plans to outlaw binding arbitration for police officers and firefighters. Bills attacking collective bargaining rights for public sector workers

have been introduced in Colorado, Michigan, Nebraska and Oklahoma. The legislation in Nebraska and Colorado would repeal/eliminate public-sector collective bargaining. (See the story on page 14 for more on the attacks on public employees.)

As President Rolando stated in his February *Postal Record* column, we have an obligation to stick up for our fellow union members when they are unfairly attacked—not only because it’s the right thing to do, but because if we let the politicians and pundits get away with these attacks, we surely will be next in line.

In fact, the NALC has already been a target of political blame. If you remember, in September, Rep. Darrell Issa falsely claimed that the Postal Service was seeking a “taxpayer bailout” and proposed that Congress get involved in collective bargaining to force concessions from postal labor unions.

Then, just recently, *The Washington Post* once again printed falsehoods concerning the Postal Service’s financial losses. President Rolando had to point out, again, that the losses are due to the massively unrealistic and unaffordable payments to pre-fund future retiree health benefits.

I find all this finger-pointing insulting. But the attacks on unions across this country are just plain unacceptable.

We have to fight alongside our fellow brothers and sisters to not only defeat these union-busting initiatives, but to help to educate America on what a union is and what we, as union members, stand for.

We are the men and women who fight for those who can’t. We are the men and women who lift up communities. We are the men and women who fight for all workers’ rights. We are the men and women who built this great country from the ground up and keep it running.

We are the men and women who collect food for the hungry, raise money for MDA, deliver supplies in national emergencies, watch out for the elderly, save lives, thwart crime and run into burning buildings.

As a union member, go ahead and blame me for the 40-hour week, overtime pay, paid holidays, paid vacation, paid sick leave, OSHA regulations, OWCP regulations, decent wages and retirement benefits.

Just don’t blame me for Wall Street’s mess. ✉