



What's up on the Hill?

By now, many of you have noticed that “the Hill,” dominated by anti-union and anti-worker ideologues formed during the 2010 election cycle, continues to attack workers and their rights. Some of the proposed legislation directly attacks the United States Postal Service and our collective-bargaining process.

Other pieces of proposed legislation attack labor in general, while others attack safeguards that were put in place to protect all American citizens.

Recently I had the opportunity to read an article in another union's monthly publication on the subject of H.R. 2587. The article caught my curiosity and, after reading it, I went to the Library of Congress (LOC) website (thomas.loc.gov) to look up H.R. 2587. The title of the legislation is “The Protecting Jobs From Government Interference Act.” What a wonderful-sounding, pleasant approach. Insert your favorite Manny word here.

The LOC website links you to the summary of the bill and its intended purpose. The explanation indicates that the legislation would amend the National Labor Relations Act to deny the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) any power to: (1) order an employer (or seek an order against an employer) to restore or reinstate any work, product, production line or equipment; (2) rescind any relocation, transfer, subcontracting, outsourcing or other change regarding the location, entity or employer who shall be engaged in production or other business operations; or (3) require any employer to make an initial or additional investment at a particular plant, facility or location.

That doesn't sound like protecting jobs from government interference. It sounds more like stopping the National Labor Board from protecting worker rights.

There is a total of 18 co-sponsors listed. Among them you will find “D. Issa” of California. It is not a surprise that he is on the bandwagon in many attempts to bust unions and destroy worker rights.

On a separate development caused by the budget proposals, American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) President John Gage provided the AFL-CIO with the following update:

I hope you don't mind a little salmonella and E. coli in your chicken, because if the Department of Agriculture (USDA) gets its way chicken contaminated with dis-

ease, feathers, and other really disgusting stuff could be on its way to your dinner plate within the year.

Around 3,000 Americans already die from food-borne illnesses each year. But now, budget cuts are driving the USDA to propose a new plan that would lay off thousands of food safety inspectors and ask the rest to inspect 175 chickens per minute as a conveyor belt whizzes them by. That's over 3 chickens per second!

(For an average reader, you're 18 seconds into reading this, and in that time you've inspected 54 chickens, right?)

We've seen many outlandish, unfair, and downright stupid consequences of budget cutting fever in the last year. I didn't think I could be surprised anymore. I knew politicians were willing to attack federal workers and slash services that create jobs and keep Americans safe.

I just never thought anyone would say: ‘Hey, let's threaten the public's safety by making chicken unsafe.’

This new inspection system for poultry slaughter plants is another example of attacks on everyday Americans going overboard. And this time it's our kids and families being put at risk. The new rule would eliminate about 1,000 jobs and cut corners on our health at a time when billionaires and corporations are getting tax breaks. It's shocking.

If we win this fight, we'll call attention to a textbook case of how federal workers serve our national community. We'll save jobs. We'll protect the public health. And we'll all be able to eat chicken without wondering if it's safe.

When Congress cuts back on funding of federal agencies, those agencies must decide where they will make cuts. Republican Rep. Paul Ryan's budget (which can be found at gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS112hconres112rh/pdf/BILLS-112hconres112rh.pdf) identifies the budget for each of the federal agencies, mandating that the oversight committees were required to report by April 27 how each agency would make budget.

How will you be affected by the cuts? How will we all be at risk? Think about who earns your vote this year. Keep yourself educated as to who protects the house of labor and who attacks it. Keep an eye on each other!

I wish to make a correction to my article in the April issue. I inadvertently misspelled the name of a letter carrier, Maureen DePrince. My apologies, Maureen, to you and your family. ✉