

AK LABOR NEWS



****PLEASE don't forget that the SHERATON and HILTON HOTELS in Anchorage are under boycott! DO NOT patronize these hotels in any manner. They continue to deny workers their basic rights and that is not what our community is about.****

PUBLIC EMPLOYEE UNIONS COMING UNDER ATTACK FROM ALL QUARTERS

The economy is in the toilet. We're clawing our way out of a prolonged recession, ravaged by high unemployment, the loss of millions of jobs, and the dream of home ownership turned into a bad dream for millions who are walking away from toxic mortgages.

And we all know who to blame, right?

Well if you believe FOX News' line of correspondents, the rest of [right-wing talk radio](#), several new emboldened Republican Governors, new state legislatures with Republican majorities, and a recently tea-party infused US Congress, the country's woes are the fault of those evil public employees and their unions.

For a fairly comprehensive article summarizing the various assaults on public employee unions check out this [New York Times article](#).

Public employees are derided as overpaid with lavish benefit packages that are breaking the tax payers. When you've got CBS' 60 Minutes program leading the charge in one-sided interviews with anti-union New Jersey governor Chris Christie,

followed by the Wall Street Journal, right wing groups like the Heritage Foundation, the National-right-to-Work Committee and other anti-union echo chambers, it makes you wonder where the so-called "liberal media" is hiding.

Robert Reich, the former Secretary of Labor had this to say in a [recent article](#): "Public servants are convenient scapegoats. Republicans would rather deflect attention from corporate executive pay that continues to rise as corporate profits soar, even as corporations refuse to hire more workers. They don't want stories about Wall Street bonuses, now higher than before taxpayers bailed out the Street. And they'd like to avoid a spotlight on the billions raked in by hedge-fund and private-equity managers whose income is treated as capital gains and subject to only a 15 percent tax, due to a loophole in the tax laws designed specifically for them.

It's far more convenient to go after people who are doing the public's work -- sanitation workers, police officers, fire fighters, teachers, social workers, federal employees -- to call them "faceless bureaucrats" and portray them as

hooligans who are making off with your money and crippling federal and state budgets. The story fits better with the Republican's Big Lie that our problems are due to a government that's too big.

Naomi Walker, the A.F.L.-C.I.O.'s director of state government relations, said many voters would oppose the antiunion efforts. "I think folks in these states are going to ask whether this is the right time to weaken unions when corporations are amassing more power than ever," she said. "We've been fighting against privatizing [Social Security](#) and sending jobs offshore and to get the best deal for the unemployed. **It would be a lot easier for Republicans if unions weren't there to throw up these roadblocks.**"

Above all, Republicans don't want to have to justify continued tax cuts for the rich. As quietly as possible, they want to make them permanent.

But according to Reich, "the right's argument is shot-through with bad data, twisted evidence, and unsupported assertions."

HEADS UP!

January 18 - Legislative Session begins

January 25-26 - Alaska AFL-CIO Legislative Conference in Juneau

February 16 - AFL-CIO training on combatting criticisms of unions

March 16 - AFL-CIO training on the subject of right-to-work

April 5 - Anchorage Municipal Election

April 17 - Legislative Session ends

PRESIDENT'S CORNER - by Vince Beltrami

Stop the Lies! Continuing from the article above it is maddening that big Corporations and their paid mouthpieces from talk radio, to cable television, to state legislatures, governor's offices, and even to the hallowed halls of Congress have decided to go after our hard-working members in the public sector while Wall Street profits soar and executive bonuses are once again off the charts. The truly maddening part is the problems that our governments across the country face are in large part due to the sins of these Wall Street banks and investors who nearly drove our country economically off the cliff. Now they are playing a game of misdirection, getting the American public to look the other way, and not look at the treason they have committed. The problem is, however, their story just doesn't add up. From the claims about unfunded pension obligations to the lies about the compensation of public employees. Unfunded pension liabilities are the result of management decisions to underfund those same pensions they criticize and because of pension investments



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What to expect of the 27th Alaska Legislature: Lots of talk about taxes

As the 27th Alaska Legislature prepares to convene on January 18th, there are many bills already pre-filed covering a broad range of topics.

But nothing is likely to dominate the conversation to the degree oil taxes will. ACES, Alaska's Clear & Equitable Share, legislation passed under former Gov. Sarah Palin, definitely took a chunk of change from the pockets of oil companies doing business in the state.

The oil industry contends that the increased taxes make Alaska one of the highest taxed places in the world to do business and has diminished exploration, hurting future prospects of jobs and revenue in the future.

Advocates of ACES point to the bulging bank account making Alaska the only state in the nation with billions in surplus. Another outcome of the new tax structure has been fat capital project

budgets, to the tune of more than \$3 billion last year. Capital projects measurably put people to work and create jobs throughout the state.

But it cannot be denied that oil produced in the state comprises about 90% of all revenue to the state of Alaska. Is ACES short-sighted? Does it take too much from the oil companies and really discourage investment and exploration, or are the oil companies playing a game of cat and mouse, trying simply to maximize their take, as they cannot guarantee a commitment of new exploration regardless of the tax structure?

The industry claims jobs will be created if taxes are lowered, but it begs the question: jobs for whom? The industry still needs to vastly improve their record of hiring locally to persuade most Alaskans a change is necessary.

On January 26th, at the Alaska AFL-CIO's legislative conference in Juneau we will hear from Sen. Bill Wielechowski as to the benefits of ACES and from Wendy King of Conoco-Phillips about why tax relief is necessary to benefit the state from the industry's perspective. It ought to be interesting.

The bottom line is that the labor community has a great interest in this debate and is in good position to weigh in either in support or opposition to changes to the tax laws.

Public employees as well as employees in the trades have a vested interest in the outcome of tax policies. Tax policy relates to job creation as well as to the impact revenues have on funding the contracts of public employees. Will ACES get a total overhaul, some tweaks, or remain unchanged? And what should labor's role be? Let us know what you think.

Employers sticking their hands in the tip jar?

The Alaska Department of Labor is taking public testimony on a proposed regulation that would allow employers to hold tips from credit cards until the next payday. The industry standard is to cash out earned credit card tips each night at the end of the shift. If this regulation changes, employers will be able to hold onto the credit card tips of the employees. But why? Is it to earn interest off money that isn't theirs? We urge you to speak out against this.

Go to:
www.labor.alaska.gov/commish/12-2010-OT-proposed.pdf :
Tell the Department a two week delay is too long.

Tips are not wages, they are a transaction between server and patron. The owners have no business holding onto their employees money.

AK AFL-CIO starting training program

When you listen to talk radio and read the paper do you get mad but don't feel like you have the facts to fight the misinformation? We want to help.

The AFL-CIO is instituting a training program that will be held most months on a variety of topics. Classes will be 2 hours at the AFL-CIO office in the evening (time yet to be determined) and are open to union officers and rank and file. The plan is to take the training on the road to other communities too.

February 16th- Have unions 'outlived their usefulness'? the facts to combat the most common misconception of our time.

March 16th- Right-to-Work for Less; we all know its bad- learn how it works and why its bad for working families.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER *cont'd*

by money managers in unsteady financial instruments on Wall Street and in the mortgage market, that when everything went belly up, the unfunded liabilities that resulted lay squarely at Wall Street's feet, not Main Streets'.

As far as compensation goes, public employees' salary and benefits may look pretty good when compared to a depressed and recession-ravished private sector employment picture and the impact it has had in an economy where the supply of workers is far outweighing the demand for their labor. But even the notion of higher than normal compensation doesn't stand up to scrutiny when you make apples to apples comparisons and take into consideration education and other factors. A recent study done at Rutgers University supports this. The total compensation of all workers shows that public employees make 3% less than their private sector counterparts and 25% less for those holding four-year bachelor's degrees. See more on this article published January 5th at <http://tinyurl.com/4sd7x75>

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) has started a STOP THE LIES campaign. Go to their new website at afscme.org/stopthelies/ to get the straight scoop. Another video featured on the site found at <http://tinyurl.com/4d68ue> shows how public employees HAVE sacrificed since the downturn and exposes the lies spread by the shameful corporate shells.

Union members need to understand and respond to the false rhetoric that pervades the airwaves and fight back with the facts. I'm sick and tired of the widespread apathy that exists in rebuking these attacks. Its time for union members to stand up and fight back with the truth. The links in these stories contain the tools to fight back. Watch, read, learn and act!