

# POLITICAL ACTION

NATIONAL AND LOCAL PLITICAL STORIES AND EVENTS

## Skilled Hands...Strong Spirits – A Century of Leadership

### The Building and Construction Trades Department Celebrates its 100th Anniversary

The Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO, hosted a 100th Anniversary celebration in conjunction with its annual National Legislative Conference in Washington, DC, April 14 – 16. Over 3,000 union leaders and guests from across the nation convened for the three-day agenda focusing on political, legislative, and industry issues that affect the livelihoods and security of the 2.5 million unionized American building trades workers and their families.

The conference was highlighted by the early-morning appearances of Senators Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton on the second and third days of the conference, respectively. The presidential candidates were invited to appear before the assembly and offer their individual narrative for the future of the nation. Both speakers were enthusiastically received by a full house of fervent unionists who gave multiple standing ovations. BCTD President Mark Ayers gave full support to both candidates and said that no matter who wins the nomination, we cannot lose, because “in Senators Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, we have two very strong and steadfast friends of the building trades.”

The conference broke attendance records, drawing over 2,400 registered delegates and nearly 1,000 guests. Attendees pushed the limits of capacity at the Washington Hilton and Towers, and a tremendous energy was felt throughout the three-day program.

BCTD President Mark Ayers opened the conference, the first legislative conference since his appointment last September. His keynote address focused on the upcoming presidential election and the need to elect a Democrat for the position so this nation can start to see some positive changes. He also discussed the legacy of the Building Trades, imploring listeners to “never, never forget that the highways and

bridges, the tunnels and the rails, the skyscrapers and the factories, and the schools and the hospitals we construct are not just jobs. They are the means through which millions of American workers struggle to maintain a community-oriented, middle-class existence.”

The second day of the conference opened with Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-MO) introducing Barack Obama. The Illinois Senator then made a rousing speech, promising to take a stand against drug and insurance companies who’ve been blocking health care reform, and fight for PLAs and prevailing wages for workers building America’s infrastructure. He pointed out that John McCain “seems to think Davis-Bacon is something that comes from a pig farm.” Sen. Obama said he intends to sign the Employee Free Choice Act when it lands on his desk in the White House. His speech was followed by “Ragin’ Cajun” James Carville, who brought many laughs from the crowd and answered questions from the audience.



*Senator Barack Obama presents his labor-friendly vision of the future to the room of delegates.*



***BCTD President Mark Ayers applauds political analyst James Carville's sometimes humorous take on the state of the nation.***

By day three, delegates showed just as much enthusiasm as they did on day one. Sen. Hillary Clinton was introduced by Rep. John Murtha (D-PA) and walked onto the stage amid screaming chants of "Hil-la-ry!" In her speech she said she wanted to be held accountable for her promises, and she planned to appoint a Secretary of Labor who is actually pro-labor. She promised to re-instill project labor agreements, which were banned from federal contracts by the first President Bush, re-instituted by President Bill Clinton, and

banned again by the second President Bush, noting that "it takes a Clinton to clean up after a Bush." After her appearance, inspiring speeches were delivered by pro-labor politicians Rep. John Tierney (D-MA) and Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY).



***Senator Hillary Clinton gets a warm reception from the thousands of union men and women gathered to hear her speak.***

Delegates spent the afternoons attending the numerous legislative and educational workshops planned for the Conference, meeting with Congressional members, and visiting with union vendors in the exhibit hall.

## International Union Committees Meet

As every year, the week leading up to the Building Trades Legislative Conference is also a time for Roofers officials to convene and work on strategies for the year ahead. Each year the International Executive Board meets at this time, as does the Market Development Committee and the Finance Committee.



***Members at work during the Market Development Committee meeting, held in the board room at the International Office.***



***The International Market Development Committee, from left to right, International Vice President Dan O'Donnell, International Director of Market Development Jim Hadel, Assistant Director of Market Development Jordan Ritenour, International Representative Paul Blaski, International Representative Mike Stiens, International Representative Eric Anderson, International Organizer Baldo Diaz, International Vice President Tom Pedrick, International Representative Gabriel Perea, and International Vice President Doug Ziegler.***