



# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Michael T. Carrigan, President  
Timothy E. Drea, Secretary Treasurer

*Published for Labor Activists*

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Call The Illinois AFL-CIO at (217) 544-4014 For More Information  
On These And Other Legislative Issues Important To Working People



## **Labor Day Events Focus on Much-Needed Health Care and Labor Law Reform**

*New study finds 31 percent of young workers are uninsured*

Working families across Illinois and the country will celebrate Labor Day this year by spotlighting their fight for health care reform and passage of the Employee Free Choice Act. At parades and events in Illinois, union members will hand out informational flyers on the issues and carry signs calling for Congress to pass both bills this fall.

“Working-class men and women understand that America’s health care system is broken,” said Michael T. Carrigan, president of the Illinois AFL-CIO. “Costs are out of control. Each year Americans are paying more for less coverage. Half of all personal bankruptcies in this country are at least partly the result of medical expenses. Most workers and their families can not afford health insurance unless they are privy to employer-based/employer-paid coverage and employers, especially small businesses, are struggling to provide coverage for their employees. Older and retired workers are frightened of losing their coverage or being discriminated against. But perhaps the most telling reason for health care reform is that 46 million Americans are currently without any coverage.”

To further demonstrate the need for health care reform, the AFL-CIO released on Wednesday a disturbing national survey of 1,156 workers, of which 602 were young workers under the age of 35. The survey found that 31 percent of young workers are uninsured because of high insurance rates and only 58 percent receive paid sick days. In fact, the report showed that for 31 percent of young workers, Labor Day is not a paid holiday.

*(For full details go to [www.youngworkers2009.org/com](http://www.youngworkers2009.org/com).)*

“We owe it to our young workers to solve the health care crisis so they can lead healthy, productive lives free from worry over these astronomical costs,” said Carrigan.

Leading up to Labor Day 2009, Illinois union leaders and rank and file members have been meeting with Congressional members in their district offices to stress the importance of the two core Labor issues – health care reform and the Employee Free Choice Act.

The Employee Free Choice Act is possibly the most sweeping Labor law reform bill to be introduced in Congress since the National Labor Relations Act (Wagner Act) of 1935,” added Carrigan. “It was also a controversial piece of legislation. But it solidified workers’ rights to form unions and bargain collectively. Now, the time has come to strengthen those rights; to pass majority sign-up, enact stricter penalties for employers who violate Labor laws, and to establish mediation and arbitration procedures for disputes. We will not back down from those key components. We expect our Representatives and Senators to do the right thing and support working families over corporate interests.”

Visit our website for a complete list of Labor Day events. Go to [www.ilaf-cio.org](http://www.ilaf-cio.org), look under **EVENTS/INFORMATION, RALLIES/EVENTS.**

## **Illinois Awarded Additional Unemployment Insurance Funds**

Governor Quinn and Illinois Department of Employment Security Director Maureen O'Donnell announced this week that Illinois has been awarded the remaining Unemployment Insurance modernization incentive funding from the federal Employment and Training Administration. Illinois was awarded the funding for passing legislation in May that allows for more unemployed workers to be eligible for unemployment benefits for a longer period of time. Senate Bill 1350, sponsored by Senator Forby (D – Benton) and Representative Phelps (D – Harrisburg), extends benefits for an additional seven weeks, increases the dependent allowance for unemployed workers with families, and ensures that no worker will be disqualified from receiving benefits if they have compelling family reasons. The legislation was the culmination of weeks of meetings between

business and labor. The bill was signed by Governor Quinn at the end of June.

The \$200 million that was awarded to Illinois this week came from President Obama's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Illinois qualified for a total of \$300 million from ARRA. An additional \$100 million was awarded to Illinois on April 20. This was based on the fact that Illinois' Unemployment Insurance law already ensured that a benefit-claimant's earnings for the most recently completed calendar quarter could be used to qualify the claimant for regular state benefits. This is what is commonly referred to as "alternative base period". The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided approximately \$7 billion to states that modernized their unemployment insurance laws by enacting worker friendly legislation.

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