



**PENNSYLVANIA AFL-CIO  
UPDATE**

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**IMPORTANT!**  
**MAKE COPIES AND DISTRIBUTE THE PENNSYLVANIA  
AFL-CIO UPDATE TO ALL UNION ACTIVISTS**

**Federal Trade Commission Says Block the Sale of Dominion Peoples to Equitable Resources**

Last week the Federal Trade Commission, (FTC) issued a complaint against Equitable Resources in an effort to block the company's plan to buy Dominion Peoples a subsidiary of People's Natural Gas Company. The FTC said in its complaint that the takeover would result in a monopoly that would result in higher prices for non-residential customers in certain areas of Allegheny County.

The FTC complaint reinforces the position of the Labor Movement which supports a delay in a recommendation by the Public Utility Commission until the pension concerns of Utility Workers Union Local 69 and consumer concerns are addressed by either the PUC or by the two companies.

PUC Commissioners were expected to make a recommendation on the sale as early as Thursday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> or by April 13<sup>th</sup> but hopefully the FTC complaint will further delay the process which would be good news for both workers and consumers.

The Utility Workers Union, along with the support of the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO and other unions oppose the sale until Equitable Resources and/or Dominion agree to live up to promises made to workers under the defined pension plan negotiated between the union and Dominion Peoples.

Equitable has expressed, in discussions with the union and its application with the PUC, that it will only abide by the terms of the collective bargaining agreement, which expires on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007. Equitable has no defined benefit pension plan and wants employees in a less secure 401k plan. Hundreds of workers, especially workers near retirement, would lose 55% of their defined benefit pension earnings if the language in the application to the PUC or the language in the collective bargaining agreement is not altered. Dominion Peoples have agreed to honor only 45% of their pension fund in a reserve that is 200% over-funded.

The Utility Workers working with the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO have asked Governor Rendell and State Legislators to convince the PUC Commissioners to delay a recommendation on the sale until the pension concerns of workers are addressed.

Both Governor Rendell and House and Senate Democratic Leaders and Legislators representing the service area in Southwestern PA have been very supportive but Republican Legislators, so far, have been reluctant to come on board. The FTC complaint provides more momentum for fairness for both consumers and the workers, members of Local 69. Unions and union members are encouraged to ask their legislators to support a delay in the recommendation by the PUC until the pension concerns of the workers are addressed.

**Gov. Rendell's Health Reform Plan:**

**Containing Costs by Eliminating Hospital Acquired Infections, Medical Errors and Ineffective Care**

In our last edition we talked about a key part of Gov. Ed Rendell's Health Reform plan "Cover All Pennsylvanians", (CAP), which expands coverage to small business and 767,000 of PA's uninsured workers.

"Cover All Pennsylvanians" will lower costs for everyone – unions, businesses, and individuals – by eliminating the cost shifting that now occurs when uninsured workers need health care. Expanding access to uninsured workers will save an estimated \$1.4 billion annually that is currently passed on to purchasers according to the plan's estimates.

The other two components of the Gov.'s "Prescription for Pennsylvania" focus on lowering costs and improving delivery and quality. This week we report on how "Prescription for Pennsylvania" is aimed at eliminating hospital acquired infections, improving care for chronic diseases, and reducing medical errors. Improvements in these three areas will reduce annual costs by an additional \$6.2 billion for all purchasers – unions, business, and individuals. The plan proposes to cease paying providers, over time, for these avoidable medical costs.

**Eliminating Avoidable Medical Costs**

**Eliminating Hospital-Acquired Infections, Medical Errors and Unnecessary and Ineffective Care.**

**Hospital acquired infections are avoidable** – yet last year in Pennsylvania they led to nearly 2,500 deaths and more than \$3.5 billion in hospital charges. These infections are contracted in the hospital and are unrelated to the reason the patient was initially admitted. On average, every patient in America is subjected to at least one medication error per day. **Hospital medical errors and Readmissions for complications and infections** cost \$965 million per year and harm 20,693 Pennsylvanians. The Commonwealth over time, will cease paying health care providers for care associated with hospital acquired infections and medical errors. Prescription for Pennsylvania will require hospitals to adapt and implement system-wide quality management and error reduction systems and interoperable electronic medical records.

**Eliminating Improper Chronic Disease Management – Heart Disease, Diabetes and Asthma.**

Pennsylvania has some of the worst hospitalization rates in the nation for chronic diseases because these patients do not receive appropriate out-patient care. Compared to the best states, Pennsylvanians with heart disease have twice as many avoidable hospitalizations and those with diabetes have four times as many avoidable hospitalizations. Even though 75% of health care costs can be traced to the 25% of patients with chronic diseases, these Pennsylvanians receive only 56% of the care they need. "Prescription for Pennsylvania" will promote the use of a nationally recognized and proven chronic care model and align payments to support the use of this model.

**Promoting a Payment System that Rewards Quality of Care.**

"Prescription for Pennsylvania" will develop a Pay for Performance initiative led by the Commonwealth and other major payers.

In our next edition we will discuss other improvements proposed by "Prescription for Pennsylvania", including: expansion of wellness programs, and improvements in quality and delivery of health care in Pennsylvania.

For more information about "Prescription for Pennsylvania" log on to the following web sites. Pennsylvanians for Affordable Health Care, [www.InsurePaNow.org](http://www.InsurePaNow.org) or the Governor's Office of Health Care Reform, [www.gohcr.state.pa.us](http://www.gohcr.state.pa.us).

**Sen. Ted Kennedy To Introduce Employee Free Choice Act  
Within the Next Two Weeks to Start Nationwide Campaign by  
Labor and Friends**

*Nationwide Grassroots Campaign  
Begins for Senate Approval*

Senator Ted Kennedy, D-Mass, will introduce the Employee Free Choice Act in the next two or three weeks, giving union leaders, activists and other supporters the opportunity to meet with Senators or their staff representatives in district offices to discuss the need for the legislation during the Congressional recess in the first week of April. Democratic Senator Bob Casey, Jr. is among the list of 44 Democratic co-sponsors. Senator Arlen Specter, who was a co-sponsor of the bill in the previous session, has indicated that he will support Kennedy's bill but may or may not sign as a co-sponsor. You are encouraged to thank Senator Casey for co-sponsoring the Employee Free Choice Act and to ask Senator Specter to support the legislation and consider becoming a co-sponsor again.

U.S. House passage on March 1<sup>st</sup> was a historic victory for working families but approval by the Senate will require additional effort and time to gain the 60 votes needed to defeat the filibuster promised by Senate Republican Leaders.

Thirteen states including Pennsylvania will be the focus of an 18 week campaign building toward the goal of a vote in the U.S. Senate by mid July, 2007. The campaign will continue beyond the U.S. Senate and is aimed at broad-based education and mobilization of union households for the 2008 Presidential elections. Bush has already indicated he will veto the bill if it reaches his desk.

The Pennsylvania AFL-CIO in conjunction with the AFL-CIO will help coordinate events and activities to be conducted by Area Labor Federations (ALF's) and Central Labor Councils (CLC's) in the weeks ahead leading up to the Senate vote and beyond. Activities include: Meetings with targeted U.S. Senators; Adoption of Resolutions by State and Local elected officials; Letters and OP/ED printed in newspapers; holding Public Forums open to the local news media; leafleting union worksites; and live and recorded phone banks to union households.

Materials for conducting these activities and events can be obtained by logging onto the Employee Free Choice web-site at [www.EmployeeFreeChoiceAct.org](http://www.EmployeeFreeChoiceAct.org). Additional materials including customizable worksite flyers, phone bank materials, sample resolutions, talking points, and media materials will also be available soon from the AFL-CIO working families' toolkit [www.workingfamilies toolkit.com](http://www.workingfamilies toolkit.com).

**Related News:** Pittsburgh City Council unanimously approved a resolution in support of the Employee Free Choice Act. The Allegheny County Central Labor Council, led by President Jack Shea with support of affiliated unions was successful in getting Council members to approve the resolution. A campaign by the Lehigh Valley Labor Council and affiliated unions led by President Gregg Potter is underway to get Allentown City Council to adopt a similar resolution. President Jack Shea and President Gregg Potter were both successful in getting newspaper editorials printed in the Pittsburgh Post Gazette and The Allentown Morning Call.

The Pennsylvania AFL-CIO is working to have a resolution introduced in the State Legislature so that working people will know where their Legislator stands on the Employee Free Choice Act.

**State Senator Robert Mellow, (D-Lackawanna) joined by State Senator Jay Costa, (D-Allegheny) has introduced legislation, Senate Bill 20 banning strikes by school employees.** The right to strike is a tool of last resort and is only used to assure that both sides, labor and management, do engage in good faith bargaining to negotiate a fair and equitable contract. Unions are encouraged to ask their state senator to **oppose** Senate Bill 20, the Mellow Bill.

**The United Food and Commercial Workers Unions** representing employees in Wine and Spirits Shops around the state are expecting at least one State Senator to introduce

legislation privatizing the Commonwealth's Wine and Spirits shops. The message is simple to Legislators: The Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board raises more than \$400 million a year for the State's General Fund; keeps the sale of alcoholic beverages out of the hands of underage drinkers; provides family sustaining jobs for more than 2,800 tax paying Pennsylvanians and has achieved record-breaking sales and improvements while controlling the sale of alcohol. If it isn't broke, don't try to fix it.

**Workers Memorial Day Events and Activities**

National AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer Richard Trumka will speak at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Workers Memorial Day Breakfast and Memorial Service on Friday, April 27<sup>th</sup> at the Sheet Metal Workers Hall on Columbus Blvd in Philadelphia. The breakfast and memorial service is co-sponsored by the Philadelphia Council AFL-CIO and the Philadelphia Area Project on Occupational Safety and Health. Contact (215) 386-7000 for more information. If your CLC or ALF is holding a Workers Memorial Day event, be sure to send the information and details to the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO Officers: Bill George and Rick Bloomingdale. We want to help you build participation and help publicize your event in the Update and in our statewide news advisory lists. Thank you.

**HOLD THESE DATES**

**Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council (PHC4)  
April 18, 2007  
Hilton, Harrisburg, PA**

**2007 Bureau of Workers' Compensation Conference  
May 30 – June 1, 2007  
Hershey Lodge & Convention Center, Hershey, PA**

**Keystone Research Center's 6<sup>th</sup> Sol Hoffman Awards Dinner  
June 7, 2007  
Hilton, Harrisburg, PA**

**PA AFL-CIO Conference on Workforce Development  
June 12, 2007  
Dixon University Center, Harrisburg, PA**

**PA AFL-CIO Community Services Institute  
July 22 – 27, 2007  
Crown Plaza Hotel, Pittsburgh, PA**

**PA AFL-CIO Cope Golf Outing  
September 20, 2007  
Westmoreland County  
Madison Club, Madison, PA**

**PA AFL-CIO COPE Institute  
October 1-3, 2007  
Harrisburg East Holiday Inn, Harrisburg, PA**

**PENNSYLVANIA AFL-CIO LOBBYISTS' MEETING**

**Meetings are held Mondays at 10:30 a.m.**

**At the PA AFL-CIO Headquarters**

Mar: 12, 19, 26; Apr: 16, 23, 30; May: 7, 21; June 4, 11, 18, 25

**Session Days:**

**PA House**

March 12, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21

April 16, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25, 30(NV)

May 7, 8, 21, 22, 23

June 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30

**PA Senate**

March 12, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 26, 27, 28

April 16, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25, 30

May 1, 2, 7, 8, 21, 22

June 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29

**WORLD WIDE WEB**

Visit the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO home page at: <http://www.paafclcio.org>

Visit the PA Legislative Website at: <http://www.legis.state.pa.us>