After some extremely challenging negotiations, in light of weakness in the lumber and wood products industry, the Carpenters Industrial Council was able to achieve contract settlements with Weyerhaeuser and Sierra Pacific Industries.

The settlement with Weyerhaeuser set the stage for the union to advocate for similar packages in other companies, under the principle of pattern bargaining.

The Weyerhaeuser settlement was ratified by members in votes taken during the week of June 16th at the facilities represented by the CIC—Aberdeen, WA, Dallas, OR, Albany, OR and Colburn, OR.

“We came miles and miles from where these negotiations started out,” noted Mike Pieti, chief negotiator and CIC Executive Secretary-Treasurer. “The opening proposals provided no wage increases in the first year and paycheck premium sharing for the health plan, as well as mandatory overtime. We had a hard time getting past these concessionary proposals. But Weyerhaeuser broke the logjam. Our close bargaining relationship with the IAM-Woodworkers paid dividends. The joint coordinated effort brought more leverage to the table which allowed us to squeeze out a fair settlement, especially in these difficult economic times.”

The Weyerhaeuser settlement calls for wage increases of 2% the first year, 2% the second year, 2.5% the third and 3% the fourth. It is a four year agreement that expires June 30, 2012. The health care package was improved with proposals to increase dental benefits, weekly accident & sickness and life insurance benefits.

Over the life of the agreement the retirement benefits for all Weyerhaeuser active employees will be improved to $45 per month per year of service for all years of service.

The Sierra Pacific settlement is similar to the Weyco package except for the health care plan, which is company-administered. There will be no premium share during the life of the agreement for the SPI group.

The pension plan was also improved for members working in SPI operations. The bargaining parties will direct the trustees of the plan to improve the benefit to $50 per year of service for years of service prior to 2004. For active participants the super credit factor will kick in at 1600 hours instead of the current 1800 hours.

As the Union Register goes to press there is a proposal from Roseburg Forest Products that will be voted by the membership. This proposal provides for wage increases of 2% the first year, 2% the second, 2.5% the third and 3% the fourth year. In addition, a special adjustment of 15 cents per hour will be applied to all hourly rates, the first year. On top of that, the skilled trades will receive bracket increases of 25 cents and 50 cents in the first two years of the agreement.

“We had to get creative to secure this settlement and put some wages in our members’ pockets,” said Pieti. “With a limited diversion of the employer’s hourly contribution to the Bledsoe Health Trust during the first two years, we were able to improve wages. The hourly contribution rate to the Bledsoe trust will be $5 per hour for the first two years, $5.25 the third and fourth year.”

CIC comes to terms with Weyerhaeuser and Sierra Pacific Industries, setting the stage for pattern bargaining.
The Carpenter's Industrial Council has joined a lawsuit to petition for removal of the marbled murrelet from the list of "threatened species" under the Endan-
gered Species Act.

The marbled murrelet is a small Pacific coast seabird with a range reaching from the Aleutian Islands off the coast of Alaska, south to the northern California coast. Marbled murrelets are usually seen in small groups of varying size, up to 40 miles of the coastal coastline. The female lays a single egg in the nest and the pair takes turns incubating the egg.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) listed the marbled murrelet as a "threatened" species in 1992 which caused cer-
tain coastal tree habitats in Washington, Oregon, and California to be protected. This meant that harvest plans for these forests were put on hold, depriv-
ing mills and logging companies of much-needed raw material.

The marbled murrelet is a very elusive species which is difficult to count. Best scientific estimates place the populate-
ation at 24,000 in the three-state area and about 66,000 off the coast of British Co-
lumbia. Population estimates from the Aleutian Islands are not available. Envi-
nomentalists argue that the populations are smaller.

The Endangered Species Act lays out rules for listing a threatened species and the lawsuit points out that the FWS did not follow those rules when listing this seabird as threatened. First, the law defines a "species" as a population or genetic group that is sepa-
rate and distinct from other related species. On this count, the marbled murrelet in coastal forests in Washington and Idaho is not a distinct species under the "distinct species seg-
ment" issue within 90 days of the listing deci-
sion but that review has never been done over the six-
ten years the mur-
relet has been listed.

The second test that must be met rec-
ognizes that habitat of threatened species of-
tentimes crosses in-
ternational boundaries (Canada and Mexico). The ESA says that a species may be considered separate and discrete if it is not being ade-
quately protected across the border. There have been previous lawsuits around this issue which forced FWS to certify this in-
ternational boundary as it relates to a common and definable species. In that Canada has the Species at Risk Act in place and issued a Canadian Marbled Murrelet Assessment in 2003, a FWS policy paper found that Canada did, in fact, provide protection to this seabird. Despite these findings the Fish and Wildlife Service failed to act and begin the delisting process as it applied to murrelets in Oregon, Washing-
ton and northern California.

Ironically, the loss of habitat for nesting marbled murrelets in the northwest states has slowed to almost zero percent due to the implementation of the Northwest For-
est Plan in 1998 to protect the Northern spotted owl. Thus, the lawsuit claims the ESA does not permit the population of marbled murrelets in the three-state area to be des-
gnated as a separate "threatened" species and secondly, protection is not needed be-
cause marbled murrelet habitat is already protected due to the overlap of habitat for the Northern spotted owl.

The lead petitioner on the lawsuit is the American Forest Resource Council, an as-
sociation that represents 90 forest prod-
ucts companies, many of whom purchase timber from federal and state lands in the marbled murrelet habitat area. Douglas County, Oregon and Ron Stuntzner, a for-
est engineer and forest land owner, are also parties to the lawsuit.
Liens and Labor Board Charges Filed Against Colonial Stair

The members of Local 2077 working at Colonial Stair and Woodwork Company in Jeffersonville and South Charleston, OH, knew the company was in financial trouble. The depressed state of the home construction industry and competition from imported stair parts were putting a severe strain on the company. Employment was down to 17 in the two plants.

In January, company owner Neil Spears announced that the plants would close one week later. The CIC Representative and the union shop committee — Terry Stephenson, Ron Binegar and Rusty Stevens — quickly called a meeting with the company and focused on the company’s contractual obligations, bargaining over the effects of the shutdown, and negotiating a closing agreement.

After this first meeting, the union gave the company an information request and an outline of the issues they intended to bargain over concerning the closure. The company refused to provide the information requested and management refused to meet to negotiate on the effects of the closure. The company’s financial officer claimed that the bank was in full control.

The council and the local committee took action. Grievances were filed. In addition, liens against Colonial’s property were filed in court for all paid days owed to members, plus reimbursement for continued health care coverage.

With continued diligence by the council, the local union committee and support of the members, the liens were resolved when the company made full payments of monies owed the members.

Further investigation revealed that the owner of Colonial sold the shop’s inventory to a business formed under a similar name, Colonial Stair & Woodwork LLC, located in northeastern Ohio. Coincidently, the new company also hired Neil Spears, the former owner of Colonial Stair and Woodwork Company, as a salesman.

Currently, National Labor Relations Board charges filed by the Carpenter’s Industrial Council are pending against Colonial Stair for not providing all information requested, for not bargaining over the effects of the shutdown and for failure to negotiate a closing agreement with the union. Charges against the company for moving the business to avoid the current labor agreement are under consideration.

Local 1521 Delivers 50-Year Pins

Photos (1 to r) show Local 1521 Fin. Sec. Tim Fameree and President Tod Zimmerman presenting Marvin Vandervest (center) with his 50-year membership card. The middle photo shows Harris Dhuey (center) being honored for his 50 years of membership by Fameree and Zimmerman. Photo on the right shows 50-year member Marvin Schiesser, (second from left) being congratulated by Fameree, Zimmerman and Trustee Dennis Harman. Vandervest started work in 1946 at Algoma Plywood and did many jobs in the plant including press operator, drum sander, size clipper and taper/slicer. When he started in 1946, Dhuey’s rate of pay was 65 cents per hour. He ended his career at Algoma traveling out of town to repair doors under the company’s warranty policy. Schiesser worked most of his time in the pre-finish department as a lead man. He retired in 1983.

Arbitrator Rules Against Mandatory Saturday Overtime in Ohio

An arbitrator ruled that Bolle Millwork in Hustead, OH did not have the right to require members of Local Union 684 to work Saturday overtime. The arbitrator also rescinded all discipline that had been imposed on members who did not report for Saturday work.

When the company gave notice for mandatory Saturday overtime, the crew was already putting in 10-hour days Monday through Friday. When union members objected to compulsory overtime, the company advised that employees failing to report to work on Saturdays would receive discipline, up to and including, termination.

The company even refused to change their position in a mediation session that preceded the arbitration hearing. “This crew was tired after working 10-hour days,” noted member Kevin Taylor, “and they were very upset when the company started requiring another eight or 10 hours on Saturday. We had a contract right on voluntary overtime and we needed to enforce it. Most of our members would volunteer to work Saturdays, but they really got their back up when the company told them they had no choice.”

Financial Problems of Medicare and Social Security Need to be Fixed

A recent report by actuaries and economists in the Bush Administration found that Medicare’s hospital insurance trust fund would be exhausted in 2019 if reforms and revenue enhancement programs were not undertaken.

The picture is better for Social Security, but the funding issue needs to be addressed for that program as well. This study projected that Social Security would be depleted in 2041. But just because we have 33 years to fix Social Security, the sooner the next President and Congress weigh in, the more modest the fix. Barack Obama, the likely candidate of the Democratic Party, advocates raising the cap on income subject to the Social Security tax. This would impact the wealthy since the income ceiling is now $90,000 per year.

There are only 11 years until Medicare is bankrupted if restructuring isn’t done or additional revenue found for it. Obama has voiced his support to reduce Medicare costs through reforms to lower the price of prescription drugs, ending subsidies for private insurers and concentrating resources on prevention and effective chronic disease management.

John McCain, the presumed Republican for President, has said, “Medicare is a fiscal train wreck” but he hasn’t yet offered solutions to address the problem.
Politics

CIC Launches Voter Activist Program

The Carpenters Industrial Council has kicked off a program which asks every local union to form a committee to help members get involved in the 2008 elections.

Executive Secretary-Treasurer Mike Pieti has requested elected delegates to lead this effort. Many of these delegates recently completed the three-day training at the UBC Training Center in Las Vegas, NV where they learned the importance of being strong union advocates and leaders. "That training in Las Vegas gives our delegates real inspiration, plus the tools to communicate and move our members to take action," said Pieti. "This program allows them to use those skills right away."

The committees will talk to members and help register members to vote. In addition, literature and handouts will be produced by the council to show where the two Presidential candidates stand on a variety of issues important to working people and their families. These committees will distribute the flyers to everyone to help them become informed about the issues. When it comes to Election Day in November, the main job of the local committee will be to help everyone get to the polls.

Delegates will receive information on how to carry out this program each step of the way.

Pieti noted that we are in a critical time in our nation’s history as we face rising fuel prices, a staggering national debt, runaway health care costs, social security funding and other issues important that, with help of our elected delegates and our members that we can make a difference on these critical issues,” noted Pieti.

Political Action is a Way of Life in Two Midwest Locals

As many Carpenters Industrial Council local unions around the country establish new political action committees, there are two locals in the middle of the country that serve as shining examples of how a union can be involved in the local political process in a positive and pro-active way.

Local 2702 in Dubuque, Iowa, starts out with the theory that it takes a whole village to build an enduring program. The committee boasts nine members, which means that more members can participate and it also makes activities much more fun, according to local president Keith Hartman.

"Every member of the committee shares the pride and sense of accomplishment when we complete a canvass or a campaign season," said Hartman. "Everyone has ownership of the process and in the outcome. The fact is, we couldn’t do a third of what we do without this large, hard-working committee."

The local has made voter registration a part of the member sign-up campaign when new workers come into the plant. A monthly pizza party is held for new employees and their families.

"It’s a fun event and we explain how the union works, how the contract protects their rights, the union-negotiated benefits, and then we sign them up," explains Hartman. "We include a voter registration form so we can get everyone registered to vote. We’ve registered family members in those meetings too. It works very well."

Here’s a sampling of the activities Local 2702 has carried out over the last eight years:

• In 2000 members knocked on doors and distributed literature for Al Gore.

• In 2004 the local invited Dubuque-area candidates to speak at a union meeting. The local endorsed two candidates, one for the House and one for the Senate, and then volunteers did neighborhood canvases and phone calls which helped both candidates win their elections.

• Worked to elect Rick Dickin-son to the U.S. Congress in 2006 with door knocking and phone calls.

• For the 2008 election season Hartman is serving as state sena- tor Tom Hancock’s campaign manager. This is the senator the local helped elect in 2004. The local will again bring in area candidates to speak with the members and will, no doubt, endorse those who pledge to work on issues of importance to working families.

In Two Rivers, WI, Local 1533 has become an active force in union and local elections. John Compton, the local’s political committee leader, reports that the local encourages voter registration and has had numerous state and federal candidates attend their union meetings. The governor of Wisconsin, the U.S. Representa-tive and the U.S. Senator have given speeches at the plant. A state senator attended a union meeting to listen to member’s health care concerns, and to discus-news the Healthy Wisconsin Plan.

In one case the local collected over 1,200 signatures concerning an issue related to future employ-ment opportunities at the Fisher-Hamilton plant in Two Rivers.

A member of Local 1533, Mike Basacke, currently holds a position on the Manitowoc County Board. During the 2008 election cycle, candidates have already contacted Compton and asked to speak to members of Local 1533. They know that an en-dorsement from this local translates to real work on the ground by volunteer members shining yard signs, neighborhood walks, literature drops and phone banks.

Paula Christensen (l), a member of the Local 1533 political action committee in Two Rivers, WI, signs up member Julie Anderson on a voter registration form.

“Every member of the committee shares the pride and sense of accomplishment when we complete a canvass or a campaign season. Everyone has ownership of the process and in the outcome.”
Joyce Harris Returned to Work in Florida School District After Local 1032 Takes Up Grievance

Joyce Harris was employed by the Santa Rosa County School Board as a custodian for 25 years when she was told she would be required to start using a large, hard-to-handle piece of equipment used to strip floors and clean carpets. In 2007, Joyce Harris was diagnosed with arthritis. She notified her employer that she could not handle the heavy and powerful machinery.

Even though she had never been required to use the machine in the past, her employer insisted that it was now necessary. She was given three options:

1) take sick leave until it ran out and then be terminated;
2) go to treatment and get cured of arthritis, or;
3) operate the piece of machinery.

Harris took sick leave and immediately called her union representative. "I had never called in sick or missed work. And I put in overtime whenever they needed me," said Harris. "I did everything they asked, but just was not physically able to operate that one piece of equipment. It didn't seem fair; I was never required to operate the floor stripper before."

Local 1032 President Joyce Powell and Executive Board Members Pat Toole and Steve Rowland went to work. "She was told by her employer that if she couldn't use the equipment she was not qualified to do her job," Toole said. "We filed a grievance and talks began with the school board."

The argument was presented to the Superintendent of the School and Harris was soon reinstated. "Joyce, Steve and Pat worked diligently for me. They knew where to get information on discrimination and the disabilities act. They really knew what they were doing," Harris said. "I can't stress enough for people to contact their union if they are in the right. I hadn't had sense enough to call them, I would have been terminated."

Harris was later voted "Employee of the Year" by her co-workers and retired in May. She plans to stay active in her union and aidily encourages others to get involved in union matters. "Everyone should get involved on an everyday basis, not just when help is needed."

Steward Training

Officers and stewards of Local 1032 attended two days of training classes April 10-11 in Pensacola, FL, to cover the duties and responsibilities of local union officers, how to operate a more active and involved local and how to carefully investigate grievances, write grievances properly and how to be effective when presenting the case to management. "I'm Vice President of a diverse group of professionals, bus drivers, warehouse workers, food service workers and custodial workers. This training was inspirational and gave me a good understanding of my responsibilities," said Steve Rowland. Pat Toole added, "The training was really informative. It was certainly worth our time. The instructor, Steve Griffith, was very knowledgeable."

Carpenters Council Developing Advanced Training for Stewards

The Carpenters Industrial Council is preparing a training course for stewards that have completed the basic steward’s course and have had some experience carrying out their duties in the work place. The day and a half course will focus on special problems encountered by chief stewards and experienced stewards, like effective communication and being an advocate, even when it may be uncomfortable to do so. The curriculum will delve into leadership qualities and how to help steward leaders better understand the final step of the grievance process, usually arbitration.

"We are emphasizing problem solving skills," said Education Director Steve Griffith. "The case study method will be used so participants will spend the majority of their time talking about realistic problems that they might have even encountered in their plants."

"We find that our members gain a lot more from these classes when they have a chance to analyze a problem in small groups, discuss it with other stewards and then work up a strategy that enforces the contract while also communicating with the members," continued Griffith. "The course will also give participants some real practice time on presenting grievances and reaching out to workers to either sign them up as union members or asking them to help out with a specific project."

"We are excited about this new course. It will contain material that has been contributed by many experienced people in the field, continued Griffith. "In addition, it will be delivered on a broad regional basis that will bring experienced stewards together from many different locals and this always adds a great deal to any program."

The program will introduce new tools for communicating with members and for building a more effective “activated” local union. Some techniques commonly used in organizing campaigns will be brought to participants to help with assessment, communications and planning around a special event. The chief stewards and the experienced stewards are usually the “look to” leaders in a local union because, after all, they take care of the bread and bacon issues that members face. Good stewards have, for example, been able to bring hundreds of members back to work after being improperly terminated.

This training course is still under development and scheduled to be tested in a Pascagoula, MS training session during the second week of August. Once that course is tested it will, undoubtedly, be revised and modified and then offered for advanced and chief stewards across the country.
On June 4, severe thunderstorms began to impact the upper midwest. Tornadoes, hail, heavy lightning and rain caused major damage. The situation worsened as rain continued the next day and then again two weeks later. Thousands of homes in low-lying areas were damaged and had to be evacuated.

CIC members in Iowa, Indiana and Wisconsin were hit. The first and second floors of the Quaker Oats plant in Cedar Rapids, IA was flooded. Jason Brandon, a member of Local 1039 reported that 34 members are off work due to the flooding of the Cedar River. The water has receded somewhat but the company is trying hard to clean things up so we can go back to work soon,” said Brandon. “It’s not good here but at least we will going back to work soon.”

The floods in Indiana were the worst that state has seen since 1913. The White River caused major damage here but at least we will going back to work soon. “The water has receded somewhat and the company is trying hard to clean things up so we can go back to work soon,” said Brandon. “It’s not good here but at least we will going back to work soon.”

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The Fond du Lac River in Wisconsin rose by six feet in one day. Residents watched helplessly as water filled their basements and rose to the living areas of many hundreds of homes. Hundreds of people were forced to evacuate to the Fond du Lac fairgrounds.

Chris Gau, a member of Local 1363 in Fond du Lac lost everything in his basement, including the water heater, furnace, washer and dryer. His house is two blocks from the river and it rained so hard that it backed up the sewers. As a result, the water in Gau’s basement is mixed with sewage. His insurance policy covers water damage from flooding, but excludes damage from a sewage backup. This means that Gau’s insurance will not cover any of the damage. Gau has applied to FEMA for assistance but hasn’t heard anything yet. Despite the grim situation, Gau is staying positive. His wife and four children are safe and he just got a hot water heater installed and is enjoying hot showers again.

How I Learned the Importance of Being an Involved Union Member

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Local 2316 in Boykins Fights to Keep Their Union

The local union, with help from the Carpenters Industrial Council, filed unfair labor practice charges with the National Labor Relations Board stating that the company broke the law when it stopped negotiating and by making changes to the union. In addition, the company is charged with illegally assisting and manipulating workers to induce them to sign a petition that would decertify the union. “People were told they’d get a $2 raise and better insurance if they got rid of the union,” said Eley.

The company also fired two workers who were outspoken union supporters. Undar labor practice charges against the company were filed in April 2008 on those cases. In May 2008 the National Labor Relations Board agreed that the company was improperly involved in the decertification attempt. Administrative law judge, Margaret Brakebusch, ruled that the company was guilty of providing improper assistance to the anti-union effort. Brakebusch found that plant supervisors illegally urged workers to sign a petition and helped others withdraw from the union.

The case now goes before the labor board in Washington, D.C., but, because only two of the five seats are filled, it is unlikely that this case will be taken up anytime soon. Because a long delay would serve the company’s anti-union agenda and because the company refused to re-open contract negotiations after the regional NLRB decision went against them, the NLRB’s acting director for the southeastern region has taken an extraordinary and unusual step. She has filed for an emergency injunction in federal court to restore union recognition in the plant.

If there’s a withdrawal of recognition and you have to wait five years before the union can go back in, employees will be totally disregulated, said Patricia Timmins, the acting NLRB regional director. “So what we need to do is take care of it now.”

The company is more inclined to come up with their very best, maximum offer because they know the committee is truly speaking for the membership.

The collective bargaining agreement between Local 2187 and Deluxe Homes in Berwick, PA expires Aug. 31, 2008. As part of the preparations for negotiations the local union called a special meeting April 21 and conducted a pre-authorization strike vote to give the union committee more strength and power at the bargaining table. Members voted overwhelmingly in favor.

Collective Bargaining Training Put Into Practice

One of the workshops conducted at the CIC Founding Convention in Reno dealt with preparations and strategies for carrying out successful contract negotiations.

One of the approaches discussed was the value of conducting a strike authorization vote of the membership early in the bargaining process — even before receiving the company’s first opening offer. “When this kind of ‘pre-authorization’ vote is approved, it empowers the union bargaining committee to decide when a company will be returned to the members for a ratification vote. The vote would also give the union committee the power to call a strike if, in their judgement, there is no other way to resolve a deadlock in negotiations.

Experience shows that when early strike authorization votes are taken and members fully support the committee, that companies tend to listen harder and take the union committee more seriously. The company is not in the position to ‘test’ various offers with membership votes in an effort to settle cheap. The company is more inclined to come up with their very best, maximum offer because they know the committee is truly speaking for the membership.

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Nursing Home Employees Keep Union

Liz Norwood (l) shares information with Chrissy Cannon, Vice President of Local 206 in Seaford, Delaware, concerning a May 8 vote to retain the union in the nursing home where they both work. Chrissy Cannon believes the company was behind the campaign to deny nursing home workers the right to union representation because management gave false information to members. Chrissy and the other committee members: Virginia Burton, Charmaine Daniels, JoAnn Colman, Rita Johnson, and Norwood, spent many hours talking to workers and correcting misstatements made by people supporting the company. Members indicated that they would not have signed the petition in the first place if they had know the truth.

Charlie Guncheon: 40-Year Member of Local 2799 Retires

Charles Guncheon, a 40-year member of Local 2799, decided it’s time to retire, sit back and relax. Brother Guncheon was initiated into the union March 13, 1968. For the past 12 years he served as the Recording Secretary. In addition, he attended UBC and Council conventions as the delegate representing the local. He worked at North Penn Gas and Utility Company. Charlie lives in Port Allegany, PA with his wife Evelyn of 36 years. They have two children, a son Matthew, stationed in Fort Carson, Colorado, and a daughter Laura, who lives in Erie, Pa. Charlie said he is looking forward to working around the house and doing some traveling with his wife. He is remembered as always having a pleasant smile on his face and did his best to handle problems brought to him by members in an efficient and professional way. Sam Dyoda, President of Local 2799, congratulates Charlie and thanks him for his many years of outstanding service. When Charlie was asked about his years with the Carpenters he replied: “I have a lot of fond memories. I’ve met a lot of wonderful people in the years I was a union officer. Best of luck in the future to the Brotherhood.” We all wish Charlie the best in the years to come.
Mortgage Banker's Association, 6.3 percent of all housing loans are past due by at least one payment. It's substantially higher for so-called sub-prime loans. If you are having trouble making your monthly mortgage payment, here are some tips for avoiding foreclosure provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

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Don't ignore the problem. It is much harder to reinstate your loan after you've missed several payments. It's best to act before you miss a payment.

Contact your lender (the mortgage company) as soon as you realize there may be a problem keeping up with your mortgage payments. Mortgage companies have options to help homeowners through difficult times. Be sure to talk with them.

Open and respond promptly to letters you receive from the mortgage company. This will help you find options to avoid foreclosure. Failure to open the mail will not be a legal excuse in foreclosure court.

Know your mortgage rights. Find your loan documents and read them so you'll know what the mortgage company can do if you don't make payments. Also, contact the State Government Housing office. State laws can be very helpful with solutions that will keep you in your home but they vary widely from state to state. Iowa, for example, has strong protections and assistance programs due to their history with family farm foreclosures.

Understand that there are foreclosure prevention options. One good internet source is listed below:

portal.hud.gov/portal/page?_pageid=33,7173486&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

Contact a HUD-approved housing counselor. Housing counselors can help you understand the law and your options, re-organize your finances and represent you in negotiations with your lender. To find a HUD-approved housing counselor near you call 1-800-569-4287.

Monitor your spending. After health care, keeping your house should be your first priority. Determine where you may be able to cut spending in order to make your mortgage payment.

Use your assets. Do you have a second car, jewelry, or a whole-life insurance policy that could be sold to reinstate your mortgage loan? Avoid foreclosure prevention companies. They charge fees to negotiate with your lender – fees that would be better spent to make the mortgage payment. They charge fees for information that HUD provides free.

Don't lose your home to “quick fix” scams. Don't sign documents that appoint an un-known person or company to act on your behalf to stop foreclosure “immediately.” You may be signing over the title to your home. Never sign a legal document without reading it and understanding it, with professional advice from an attorney, a trusted real estate professional or a HUD-approved housing counselor.

Member of Local 2661, Fordyce, AR Collects Union Pins

Keith New, a member of Local 2661 in Fordyce is a collector. He gravitates to coins, small knick-knacks, stamps, baseball memorabilia, die-cast race cars, and union pins from UBC conventions.

“I was amazed to see all the excitement around pin trading when I went to my first convention,” said New.

That was the 39th convention in 2005. “It was real easy to get hooked when I saw the lapel pins that different local unions and councils brought to the conventions,” he continued.

“Some are one-of-a-kind that you’ll never see at another convention, and others are funny or extremely beautiful. They also have a lot of meaning because they come from other brothers and sisters in this UBC. They make you feel just a little more connected,” he said.

One of New’s favorites is a pin from a New York City local showing the twin towers. He associates this pin with the local’s Irish drum and bagpipe marching band that played during one convention.

“They were very impressive,” recalled New.

Keith New, a member of Local 2661 in Fordyce, AR holds a display of some of the union lapel pins he has collected from UBC conventions. He estimates that he’s got between 100 and 150 union pins in his collection. “Collecting these pins makes you feel a little more connected to UBC members all across the country,” he observed.

Under the U.S.-Canada Softwood Lumber Agreement (SLA) implemented in October 2006, 1) the U.S. stopped collecting countervailing and antidumping import duties at the border, 2) Canada imposed taxes and quantity ceilings on lumber exports to the U.S., 3) provinces were encouraged to move away from administered pricing of stumpage, and 4) approximately US $5 million in U.S. duty collections were allocated to injured firms.

The taxes imposed by the Canadians on US lumbermen hoped. On the other side it is important that the U.S. government and the industry group Fair Lumber Imports monitors and challenges Canadian violations of the SLA in order to close all gaps.
**Washington Forest Practices in 1935**

Recently, a January 1935 issue of the West Coast Lumberman magazine came to the attention of the Union Register. We thought our readers would enjoy a few excerpts from the magazine, describing state forest policy on the books seventy-three years ago. The following are quotes from that magazine:

The state has for many years maintained an enviable record among western states for progressive legislation. It has on its statute books a number of very constructive forest laws. Except for some amendments to the forest law since its passage in 1915, they have, however, been largely ineffective because sufficient funds for carrying them out were not provided.

Among the more important of these are:

1. **Excellent laws of fire prevention and control.**

2. **The Compulsory Forest Patrol Law enacted in 1917 which authorized the forestry Dept. to assess not to exceed in excess of five cents per acre on all timber lands to fund a fire protective association.**

3. **Authorization for research has been granted to the Forest Div. of the Dept. of Conservation and Development but funds were not provided.**

4. **In 1921 the Adamson Act provided $5,000 which also authorized the state to purchase lands suitable for reforestation, 9,481 acres of cut-over lands were acquired, 5,004 of which were a gift.**

5. **In 1923 the legislature provided for the establishment of the present State Forest Board.** The duties of the board were, however, limited to a policy covering the establishment of state forests and the acquisition of logged-off lands suitable for growing purposes and their management on a sustained yield basis. Not more than $2 per acre can be assessed.

6. **In 1927 the legislature provided for the establishment of the State Forest Board.** Any lands acquired through tax delinquency, the lands to be held in trust and managed for the benefit of the counties, the state to reimburse itself for the cost of maintenance and administration from any income derived from these lands, the remainder to be turned over to the counties.

7. **In 1931, a special yield tax was enacted, providing for the assessment of logged-off lands chiefly useful for growing forests, at $1.00 per acre west of the summits of the Cascades and 50 cents per acre east thereof. Out of 150 applications requesting the listing of 250,000 classified acres, it has been possible to examine and list only 185,250 because there was no appropriation for carrying out the provisions of the act.**

Forest practice laws in Washington State in 1935 dealt primarily with funding associations for forest fires and funding fire fighting activities. The State Forest Board was established for the purpose of acquiring logged-off lands that could be replanted and managed on a sustained yield basis. Even though the Board couldn’t spend more than $2.00 per acre, the state acquired 9,481 acres. The State Forest Board was established for the purpose of carrying on research on state forests but funding was not provided.

**Higher Tax Credits Available for Co-Gen Energy and Biomass Plants**

Government subsidies and tax credits will stimulate many forest products companies to build co-generation energy and biomass plants in the future. A number of states have enacted mandates requiring that a given percentage of their energy needs must come from renewable sources. And deadlines have been set to meet these goals.

Oregon recently upped the Energy Tax Credit from 33% to 50% for qualified projects. This credit applied to logged-off fuel boilers, which have been used by the forest products industry for decades. Sierra Pacific, for example, started co-generation twenty years ago and now operates eight co-gen plants in California and Washington.

Woodsy biomass can also be used to create liquid fuels. Cellulose ethanol can be produced by breaking down wood fiber in a process similar to the way wood is digested to make paper pulp. The technology is in its infancy—separating wood fiber into lignin and sugar—but once broken down the lignin can be burned for fuel and sugars can be fermented to make ethanol.

A company called Range Fuels in Georgia has broken ground for a plant that will be the first to produce cellulose ethanol for commercial use. U.S. law now requires that one-third of its oil imports be replaced with cellulose biofuels by the year 2022.

**Green Jobs**

For organized labor the challenge for these “green collar” jobs being created with large government subsidies is to guarantee those jobs are living wage jobs, that they provide health and retirement benefits and workplaces that allow workers to join unions, if they choose, without interference from the employer. These conditions represent a modest exchange for the billions of tax-payer dollars that government will be sinking into the alternate fuels industry. Americans are entitled to high quality jobs in this emerging government-aided industry.

**Congress Derails Bush’s U.S.-Columbia Free Trade Agreement**

President Bush sent the U.S.-Columbia Free Trade Agreement to the Congress on April 8. Under the terms of fast track authority, the Congress is required to vote on the proposed treaty in 90 legislative days. Of course, this outraged many members of Congress who did not want to vote “yes” or “no” on such a controversial trade pact just as the election season was warming up. Several Democrats devised a strategy to delay indefinitely a vote by proposing a resolution stating that “mandatory time lines” in the Free Trade Act do not apply to the trade agreement. This effectively set the measure aside for an indefinite period.

The agreement, negotiated by the Bush Administration and Columbia, is a continuation of Bush’s failed trade policy which has contributed to a trade deficit of over $708 billion in 2007. And the argument isn’t just over the export of U.S. jobs to Columbia. It’s also about Columbia’s horrific human rights record. Some 39 trade unionists were murdered in 2007 and 2007-2008. Of the more than 2,500 murders of trade unionists since 1986, the government has successfully prosecuted less than 3 percent of the cases.

Reports of the United Nations International Labor Organization shows that the wages of Columbia’s workers are an estimated 62% below the US level, and that the wages of union workers are an estimated 12% below the US level. Fewer than 2 percent of Colombian workers are covered by collective bargaining agreements. This is certainly a strong indicator of the extreme difficulty workers in Columbia have when attempting to form a union. The President of Colombia, for example, continues to accuse workers falsely of linkages to radical insurgent groups and this, conveniently, suppresses the trade union movement in Columbia. A worker speaking in favor of a union in Columbia is in grave danger.

**Unions Are Good for Business**

According to Professor Harley Shaiken of the University of California-Berkeley unions are associated with higher productivity, lower employee turnover, improved workplace communication and a better-trained workforce.

A recent survey of 72 different and independent studies indicated that union workplaces are from 7 to 10 percent more productive than nonunion facilities.

Unions are associated with higher quality workforce training. In many cases the union has the capacity to offer the training.

While detractors loudly proclaim that unions drive employers out of business, academic research refutes this claim. According to professors Freeman and Kleiner, unionism is a statistically insignificant factor on whether a firm fails. Firms go out of business for all sorts of reasons but merely being union isn’t one of them.

**China Announces Plan to be Self-Sustaining in Wood Supply**

Logs from Russia has been a major source of timber for China’s wood manufacturing industry but the Russians have been steadily escalating log export duties. This has caused the Chinese to rethink their timber growing policies.

The Chinese recently announced that they intend to become self-sufficient in wood fiber by 2020, with a mix of programs that will drive large-scale and rapid expansion of fast-growing, high yield plantations. The plan sounds improbable, at best. China wants its high yield plantations to provide a whopping 133 million cubic meters in new volume in just twelve years.

**Weyerhaeuser Joins With Chevron to Form Biofuels Alliance**

Weyerhaeuser recently announced that the company has formed a working alliance with Chevron to study the feasibility of commercializing the production of biofuels from wood cellulose. The project will examine retorting plants to transform wood fiber and other sources of cellulose (except food products) into economical, clean-burning fuels for cars and trucks.

Weyerhaeuser indicated that they’ve been working with research universities, national laboratories and tech companies on research to convert forest products to ethanol. The alliance with Chevron is one more step (the production feasibility step) the company is taking to be a leader in cellulose ethanol since this alternate to fossil fuels appears to have strong future, once the technology is in place.

Weyerhaeuser does admit, however, that there are some serious research hurdles to overcome.

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Buried in the Farm Bill, passed by Congress in May, was a little noticed provision that reduces taxes for C-Corporations timber held for 15 years or more. The tax reduction is significant, from 35 percent to 15 percent. The timber tax bill has been a top priority for the Weyerhaeuser Corporation for the last three years and is worth an estimated $182 million to the company. Weyerhaeuser reports that their overall federal tax bill will be cut from 35 percent to 17 percent.

Weyerhaeuser argued that this measure was needed to bring tax rates into line with taxes applied to so-called REITs and rates applied in other timber-producing countries. Without this tax reduction it would have been unlikely that Weyco would retain ownership of 6.4 million acres of lands held in the U.S. Other companies, like Georgia-Pacific, International Paper, Potlatch and Boise Cascade have either sold off timber lands or transformed them into REITs (Real Estate Investment Trusts) to take advantage of lower tax rates. This is a case where bad U.S. tax policy, not good business strategy, is dictating restructuring of the forest products industry.

One of the first forest companies to adopt the REIT was Plum Creek, based in Montana. When Plum Creek reorganized into a REIT, forest lands were completely separated from the manufacturing plants and forest lands became the primary profit center because the tax rate was cut approximately in half.

Plum Creek took a tax break designed for real estate developers and applied it to forest lands. The arrangement works against the principles of an integrated forestry and innovative by owning timber and manufacturing side by side. The REIT timberlands side of the company actually undermined and weakened manufacturing methods. The REIT timberlands side of the company actually undermined and weakened the manufacturing side of Plum Creek.

But on Wall Street short term greed rules the day; even if it means sacrificing the future. After observing Plum Creek, shareholders of other forest products companies, like Georgia-Pacific, International Paper, Potlatch and Boise Cascade have either sold off timber lands or transformed them into REITs (Real Estate Investment Trusts) to take advantage of lower tax rates. This is a case where bad U.S. tax policy, not good business strategy, is dictating restructuring of the forest products industry.

Mike Pieti, Executive Secretary of the Carpenters Industrial Council commented, “We weighed in on this bill because we believe that it will give Weyerhaeuser manufacturing plants more stability and more durability. We want to see strong union firms that can be efficient and innovative by owning timber and manufacturing plants and also by making new products that appeal directly to building contractors. REITs would never do that.”

Mutual owns 18 million Weyerhaeuser shares. Instead of caving into this short sighted strong arming from Wall Street, Weyerhaeuser decided, three years ago, to seek a tax reduction in the Congress to make their timber tax rate comparable to the rate applied to REITs and to the foreign competition. A surprising group of allies were assembled to support the measure, including the two Democratic Senators from Washington, conservation groups, the Carpenters Industrial Council and the United Brotherhood of Carpenters.

In his letter to members of Congress in October 2007, UBC President Douglas McCarron wrote, “The forest products industry is facing serious challenges. Foremost among these is that the large, integrated U.S. companies, many of which are unionized, are subject to significantly higher income taxes than their overseas competition. The United States has the second highest taxes on timber in the world among major competitor nations. The effect of this disparity is that U.S. companies cannot profitably undertake certain investments that their competitors can. This measure supports an industry that provides good jobs that support families and communities.”

$5.50 the fourth year.

“We measure the financial health of a health plan by examining the reserve accounts and building up that isn’t needed to pay out regular day to day claims for doctors and hospitals. The Bledsoe Trust currently has a reserve that could continue making premium payments for 23 months, if contributions stopped. That’s a very strong position so moving a portion of that health and welfare contribution will not jeopardize the financial strength of the plan nor the excellent coverage our members now enjoy,” concluded Pieti.

The Roseburg offer also includes a directive to the health plan trustees to improve the benefit for weekly disability, life insurance, dental benefits and a smoking cessation therapy program.

The Roseburg Forest Products–Carpenters Industrial Council pension plan proposal going to the members provides for a defined benefit of $45 per month per year of service during the life of the agreement.

Negotiations are continuing with the other companies and meetings are scheduled over the next several weeks with Roseboro Company, Boise Cascade, Sierras Pine, and others.

The mandate given council negotiators by the local union delegates at the February Wage Conference was to provide wage increases in each year of the contract and to avoid employee paycheck premium sharing in the health plans. Those things have been accomplished in the two settlements already achieved and in the proposal going out for a membership vote in Roseburg Forest Products mills.

“TheThose principles will continue as a cornerstone of the negotiations that will be carried out with the remaining companies,” said Pieti.

Chuk Macrae (l), President of the IAM-Woodworkers District Lodge W1 and Mike Pieti, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Carpenters Industrial Council lead contract negotiations with Weyerhaeuser.
Claude Tremelling is a retired timber faller from Jackson, California, and a 50-year member of Local 2927 in Martell, CA. He turned 85 on May 8.

After returning from his stint in the Navy in 1945, Claude started out peeling poles for a utility pole company. McCormick and Baxter. He was paid 4 cents a foot. In 1949 Claude moved to Bigelow Logging in Foresthill, CA and became one of the charter members of a new Lumbar and Sawmill Workers local union chartered that same year.

Claude went into the woods as a timber faller in 1951 and broke his ankle nine years later. It took him all winter to recuperate, but in 1961 he returned to the woods with a fused ankle and an ankle brace to keep his foot under him. Claude stood up for his principles. In 1965 he walked off the job, with all of the other fallers, because the company "got cheap." Even while working as an independent contract logger he maintained his union membership.

Claude was happy to move into a union job under Local 2927 in 1983 because many companies were eliminating their union logging crews. Claude continued to fall timber until he retired in 1985.

When Tremelling first went into the woods in 1945 he used a "miserity whip" hand saw that required a faller on each end to take turns pulling the saw through the wood. Luckily, he didn't have to wait long for the first gas powered chain saws that were introduced in 1945. The brand name of his first power saw, with a seven foot bar on it, was Mall. Typically, loggers worked on a piece rate, Tremelling explained. In the 1950s he was paid 72 cents per thousand board feet of timber he put on the ground. A board foot is 12 inches by 12 inches by 1 inch. He and his partner set a goal of 70,000 board feet a day so they could split $50 per day.

Claude said that he always tried to work union because the men were treated better than in nonunion companies. And wages and benefits were always better under the union contracts Tremelling pointed out. Claude gives high praise to the lumber industry pension plan and the health care plan that were introduced in 1961 by the then Western Council of Industrial Workers. The health care plan is called the Bledsoe Trust today and Tremelling still has coverage as a retiree.

Claude frequents the union hall in Martell. He's an inspiration to the members of Local 2927 for his strong pro-union stance over all these years, when it would have been easier to shut up, take inferior wages and keep working nonunion.

That's just not Claude Tremelling.

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Corporations Fund Ad Campaign against Employee Free Choice Act

An anti-union group funded by corporate America has been spending a ton of money on full page newspaper ads and TV spots trying to convince voters and prominent Congressional candidates that they should oppose the Employee Free Choice Act which passed the House of Representatives last year but was never brought to a vote in the Senate due to a Republican-led filibuster.

The Employee Free Choice Act would allow workers to become unionized when a majority of workers sign authorizations to certify a union. They then use the 3 to 4 weeks of campaigning inside the plant to intimidate, harass, make threats, fire union advocates and other tactics to prevent a truly open, fair and free election. Unfortunately, the penalties for violations of the law are extremely weak and do not deter companies from breaking the law.

That part of the story isn’t told in the union-bashing ads. One ad shows a tough-talking boy in a school classroom telling his classmates they’re not going to vote for class officers by secret ballot. Another showed blue violators making seemingly sarcastic remarks about how much they enjoy belonging to a union. One says, “I think its great my union dues are going to politicians I don’t even like.”

Of course, as is often the case, these ads completely misrepresent workers making seemingly sarcastic remarks about how much they enjoy belonging to a union. One says, “I think its great my union dues are going to politicians I don’t even like.”

Many of these corporations have highly questionable means. Before Berman established his own PR firm he served as director of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce restaurant chain. One of Berman’s most “infamous” campaigns was designed to defeat the effort of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) to lower the legal blood-alcohol limit for drivers. It was funded by the American Beverage Institute.

Corporations have perverted and abused the current law pertaining to union certification elections. In most cases companies force an election when told that a majority of their workers have signed cards requesting a union. They then use the 3 to 4 weeks of campaigning inside the plant to intimidate, harass, make threats, fire union advocates and other tactics to prevent a truly open, fair and free election. Unfortunately, the penalties for violations of the law are extremely weak and do not deter companies from breaking the law.

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American Restaurant Group
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Cracker Barrel
Marriott Corp.
Olive Garden
Philip Morris
Shoney’s
TGIF Friday’s

Many of these corporations have a long history of combating unions at every turn, by legal and also with highly questionable means. For example, before Berman established his own PR firm he served as director of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and worked for the Pillsbury Restaurant Group and Steak & Ale restaurant chain. One of Berman’s most “infamous” campaigns was designed to defeat the effort of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) to lower the legal blood-alcohol limit for drivers. It was funded by the American Beverage Institute.

Forest products unions from throughout Asia and the Pacific region have produced a position paper under the International Trade Union Confederation recognizing that sustainable forest management systems, coming into greater use to mitigate global climate change and to reduce deforestation, will have a major impact on forest industry workers.

To play a role in forestry programs aimed at reducing CO2 emissions, workers and their trade unions must be at the decision-making table and they must have their interests addressed.

Below is the check list developed by these unions:

1. Develop the capacity for workers, their unions and communities to participate in the debate and formulation of policy.
2. Recognize the rights of indigenous land tenure rights, including sustainable industrial management of those forests.
3. Support for integrated forest industry activities that provide sustainable outcomes and self-sufficient local businesses.
4. Include union, worker and community representatives as principal decision makers when it comes to “social” indicators such as fair pay, non-discrimination, safe working conditions, the right of workers to organize without interference and to ensure that unions are free of employer/government control.

These unions also advocated monitoring, surveillance and reporting requirements to help enforce these standards and to prevent corruption and unsustainable forest practices.

Finally, the position paper pointed out that “locking up” forests under carbon offset programs is not sustainable and will not be successful.

Forestry and wood trade unions signing on to this position paper were from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Vietnam, Japan, Papua New Guinea Solomon Island, Fiji, Australia and New Zealand.