

# Sweeney farewell cites achievements, unfinished business

PITTSBURGH (PAI) — AFL-CIO President John Sweeney's Sept. 13 farewell "state of unions" speech to the federation's convention here cited labor's achievements of recent years, notably in politics. But he warned that "excitement over our possibilities is tempered by realities of our times."

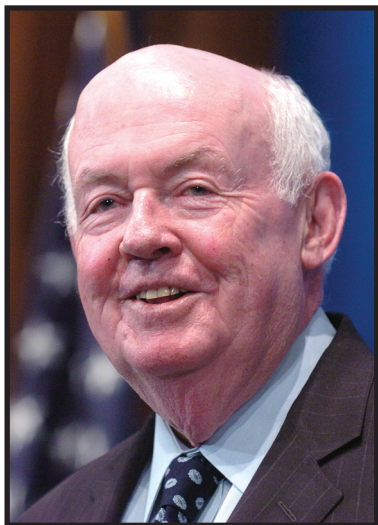
The 75-year-old New Yorker, addressing 708 convention delegates, more than 300 alternates, and hundreds of guests, cited labor's election of pro-worker Democratic President Barack Obama and in enlarging pro-worker majorities in Congress.

But those successes — plus two more he confidently predicted, universal affordable health care and labor law reform — come in the face of tough economic conditions. "We're seeing glimmers of an economic recovery, yet 20 million of our brothers and sisters are still without work," Sweeney stated.

"The poor and out-of-work are no longer invisible or abstract figures — they're our friends and neighbors, our mothers and fathers and our sons and daughters," he said.

And while Sweeney is optimistic that both health care reform and the Employee Free Choice Act will pass, the reality differs.

Republican opposition sapped the momentum for health care revision, notably establishment of a government-run "public option" to buy insurance, thus establishing competition for the private insurers.



JOHN SWEENEY

And labor and its allies are still scrambling for the 60 Senate votes needed to break a planned GOP filibuster against the Employee Free Choice Act. The talkathon threat led Senate sponsor Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, to discuss possible compromises for the key provision labor backs and businesses oppose: Automatic recognition for unions at a workplace or a company once they get union authorization cards from a verified majority of workers there.

"We're on the cusp of the greatest advance in labor law reform in 70 years, but we're taking heavy fire from the corporate captains of deceit,"

Sweeney said, referring to business' multi-million dollar campaign against the law. "We're closer than ever to winning our long struggle for universal health care, but our success has kindled a firestorm of meanness

stoked by politicians playing on fear, racism, nativism, and greed. "Every one of our tasks represents unfinished business — and the tasks we're challenged with are daunting. But if there is one thing we've learned

over the past 14 years, it is this: Miracles present themselves on the shoulders of commitment, unity and action," he declared. "For us solidarity is more just a strategy. It's a way of life."

## Musicians Local 99

# 'Fair Trade Music' campaign launched

**Project seeks to establish minimum pay guarantees for all working musicians**

A coalition of Portland musicians has launched the "Fair Trade Music" campaign to establish minimum pay guarantees for performing musicians in the Portland area. Co-sponsored by the American Federation of Musicians Local 99 and the Labor Education and Research Center of the University of Oregon, the coalition includes union and non-union musicians.

"This is simple," said Local 99 President Bruce Fife. "We think there ought to be a reasonable, minimum compensation for musicians when they work for a business enterprise. And when you pay your \$5 or \$10 at the door, we want you to know that your money actually makes it to the artists."

Fife said musicians routinely see their compensation reduced to a "tiny fraction" of what is brought in through cover charges through deductions for venue expenses such as sound staff, door staff, promotional fees, and 'house fees.'

The Fair Trade Music coalition has developed a tiered pay scale that adequately compensates musicians based on venue type and capacity, while still allowing the house to make a



fair profit.

Fair Trade Music is endorsed by over 200 Portland-area bands, including such well-known acts as March Fourth, 3 Leg Torso, and Keeagan Smith. It is also supported by the Cascade Blues Association, the Portland Songwriters Association and the International Alliance of Theater Stage Employees Local 28.

Fair Trade Music is asking the general public to only patronize venues displaying Fair Trade Music window stickers, indicating their support and commitment to fairness. The coalition also is offering musicians Fair Trade Music buttons and stickers to display at their gigs in silent solidarity with the campaign.

For more information, go to their Web site at [www.FairTradeMusic PDX.org](http://www.FairTradeMusicPDX.org).

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