

Republican NLRB bill is 'outsourcers Bill of Rights'

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Machinists (IAM) member Patrick Bertucci is a shop steward at Boeing's Renton Wash., plant, where he works on wing assembly for the Boeing 737. Last month he spoke to a packed Capitol Hill press conference about a U.S. House Republican bill designed to cripple the National Labor Relations Board's ability to protect workers:

"When I go to work every day I am held accountable to build the best and safest aircraft in the world, Bertucci said. "The Boeing Co. needs to be held accountable for their actions as well ... I want Boeing to be successful. But no company can succeed when they break the law."

The legislation (H.R. 2587), which

Republicans rammed through committee without a hearing, is awaiting a vote by the full House.

Its target is the NLRB's recent decision to file a complaint against the Boeing Co. The NLRB charges that Boeing moved production away from its Washington facility in retaliation for the workers exercising their right to strike, and that's against the law.

The Republican bill should be called "the Job Outsourcers' Bill of Rights," says Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.), ranking minority member of the House Education and Workforce Committee. "It will eviscerate the rights of workers, help ship more jobs overseas, undermine job creation in this country, and kill opportunity for people who are

working hard and playing by the rules."

Bertucci says as a result of Boeing's actions, workers on the shop floor are in fear of losing their jobs.

"They tell me they feel intimidated to accept any contract Boeing gives them because we exercised our legal right to bargaining collectively," he said.

International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) President Harold Schaitberger says the bill is part of a bigger attack on workers' rights going on in Wisconsin, Ohio and around the country.

"This is no accident," he said. "This is an organized, orchestrated attempt to destroy America's labor movement, which is responsible for representing the rights of workers ... This is nothing

more than an extension of the [of the goals] of right-wing extremists that were swept into office last November — including many in this Congress — 20 state legislatures changing control, and too many governors' mansions controlled by those who simply want to turn the clock back on workers."

Miller says that under current law it is illegal for a company to retaliate against workers for exercising their rights, but if H.R. 2587 becomes law, "workers will exercise their rights less frequently and wages, benefits and working conditions will get worse."

Under this bill, Miller said worker rights suddenly become meaningless because there is no effective remedy when workers' jobs are outsourced in

violation of their rights. "A right without a remedy is no right at all," he said.

In other developments at the NLRB, Machinists District Lodge 751 is fighting a request by Boeing to keep the public from hearing important evidence in the complaint. Among the things Boeing doesn't want the public to know are specifics about the tax incentive package it's getting from South Carolina.

Boeing's lawyers have filed court documents asking for the power to clear the courtroom whenever these and other topics they don't want discussed come up. They also want the judge to excuse the company from having to turn over key documents related to its decision-making, and to restrict who would get to see the documents it does turn over.

Among those documents are studies comparing the cost of moving the second 787 line to Charleston with the cost of leaving it at Everett.

"We suspect the documents Boeing wants to keep secret prove that Boeing executives didn't make a legitimate business decision to transfer work from Everett to Charleston, but instead broke the law by moving because of union activity here," said District 751 spokeswoman Connie Kelliher.

(Editor's Note: Mike Hall of the AFL-CIO NOW blog and the IAM 751 Aero Mechanic contributed to this report.)

CLUW cheers federal recommendations on women's health

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) — The Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), which has long campaigned for a greater emphasis on women's health, is cheering a new federal report recommending key women's health services such as testing for cervical cancer and providing contraceptive services be part of the new health care law's basic package of health care for which people would not have to shell out co-pays.

"Clearly, CLUW is thrilled, especially about the recommendation for no co-pays on contraception and coverage of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) testing for women over 30," said Carolyn Jacobson, who runs the organization's campaign to raise women's awareness about the need for HPV testing to combat cervical cancer.

"CLUW is delighted with the report, which recommends that important preventive services should be covered by health insurance at no out-of-pocket cost to women, including annual well-woman visits, contraception and other services," the group added in an e-mail to its activists. It's also urging them to push the Department of Health and Human Services to agree to the recommendations.

An expert committee convened by

the National Institute of Medicine identified medical areas where payments for preventive services specific to all women could both improve health and cut U.S. medical costs. Unless it gets a lot of flak, HHS will try to implement these recommendations as part of following last year's health insurance law:

- Expansion of screening for cervical cancer, counseling about sexually transmitted infections and expanded HIV counseling. The cervical cancer screening, like the others, would be evidence-based. It would start at age 30.

- A fuller range of contraceptive education, counseling, methods and services so women can avoid unwanted pregnancies and better spaced child-bearing. The panel said the federal Food and Drug Administration should approve the contraceptive methods. Some 17.4 million women needed publicly funded contraception last year.

- Screening for gestational diabetes, plus lactation counseling and measures to help promote breastfeeding, which helps pass on immunities and protections to infants.

- Payment for at least one well-woman preventive care visit annually.

- Screening and counseling for adult women and adolescent girls to help them cope with domestic and interpersonal violence in a culturally sensitive and supportive manner. The report said 5 million women are physically, sexually or emotionally abused each year. Thus, screening for risk is central to women's safety, as well as addressing current health concerns as well as preventing future health problems.



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