

Respect, Recognition, and Return on Investment

It's my privilege to speak on behalf of the IUPAT Government Affairs Department.

In addition to putting candidates and laws in place that advance the organized labor movement, the three primary goals of the IUPAT Government Affairs department are:

RESPECT, RECOGNITION, and RETURN ON INVESTMENT.

Over the past five years, the IUPAT's political action continued to grow and mature into an operation that has earned the respect of our colleagues in the worlds of labor and politics.

We are known as the "go to" organization when someone wants the best support for a candidate, a ballot initiative, legislative action, financial support, and all the other components of the political landscape in organized labor.

From a time when our organization's idea of political action amounted to a small annual contribution to the DNC and zero staff dedicated to political action, to one that now employs five full-time representatives with more on the way and an aggressive strategy of financial support for not only the DNC, but the RNC, the NRCC, and any other candidate or cause, Democrat or Republican, that fights for working families.

How have we gotten to this point? Well, some of you may remember a certain GST in a previous administration who was empowered to build on the foundation of a project that continues to grow daily.

Of course, I'm talking about our current general president, who, at the time, realized that, for our organization to grow and to protect the workplace rights, fair wages, and safety of



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our members, we had to be at the table and not watching through the windows.

We initiated a plan that has built the coffers of our political action committees to a size that equals or tops other labor organizations that are two or three times our size in members.

Our district councils bought into this plan to escalate our PACs, and their dedication and faith in the system was the key component to the success we reap today.

Unfortunately, despite the promise of reform, the almighty dollar is still a required tool to play in the political leagues we play in now.

However, money doesn't solve everything. There is one more piece to success in political action that can't be measured by how fat your wallet is: membership participation.

The respect this organization now receives has been earned on the backs of our members, their families, and our retirees, who tirelessly answered our call for action when rallies needed a show of colors and cheers, when phone banks needed voices, and our door-to-door campaigns needed feet on the street.

Time and time again, your leadership has met with a candidate or a party official, and the first line we hear is, "You guys are everywhere!"

We must continue to build on this mobilization. Just because we have a Democratic president and Congress does not mean anything will be given to us. It doesn't mean anything will be easier. Don't believe me? Well, let's be honest: We've had a Democratic president and Congress a time or two before. Was it ever easy for us?

The ongoing EFCA and health-care debate is a great example. Remember SITUS? We must continue to carry our message daily, and with the same enthusiasm and determination we showed in the presidential election.

We are one of only a few labor organizations that are members of the Republican Governors Association and Republican National Committee. In fact, over the last five years, we have contributed over \$600,000 to Republican and Independent candidates. Why? Because they supported our members.

Of course, there are many times we differ on issues, but is it productive not to have a dialogue at all?

Our willingness to cross the aisle for their support has resulted in our general president being asked by

leading Republicans to facilitate meetings with labor.

I know that there are many times when, standing in the October cold at a rally, or knocking on doors, or phone-banking, those of us who volunteer have wondered, "Is it all worth it?" I can only answer one way: ABSOLUTELY! Aside from the great feeling of standing next to one of our victorious candidates on election night, the satisfaction we get from this organization being recognized by those who we support—the leaders of our countries—justifies my answer.

Let's look at some of the appointments our members have received as a direct result of our political activism.

Our most recent one is in New York. Governor Paterson appointed District Council 9 Business Manager/Secretary-Treasurer Joe Ramaglia as commissioner of the New York State Bridge Commission. I don't have to tell anyone in here how many bridges in New York City alone need painting.

In West Virginia, Governor Mancin appointed District Council 53 member Dan Poling to an open House seat.

In Philadelphia, District Council 21 member Joe Ashdale serves as the appointed chairman of the Parking Authority.

In Colorado, District Council 15 member Dennis Creese was instrumental in delivering legislation to halt worker misclassification after being tasked by the governor to be the point person in this initiative.

I can stand here and list dozens more, but you get the picture. These are not just ceremonial positions—these are positions that lead to work for our membership.

For the short time I have been in Washington, DC, I have had the privilege to work for a great boss. But, in my mind, General President

Williams is an even greater teacher. The one message he has continually used when discussing situations, the question he asks, is really very simple: What's the organization's return on investment?

And, when you look at what the actions of our political involvement on all levels have collectively returned in grants to our councils, training funds, and our organization as a whole, we have seen great returns: A \$2 million grant to District Council 5 in Washington and Oregon. A quarter of a million dollars in District Council 26 in Michigan. And, as recently as this past Thursday, DC 4 in Buffalo received a \$300,000 grant to upgrade their training center. To date, we have received more than \$7 million in grants country-wide as the direct result of our activism.

As you can see, our ROI has been quite substantial.

Let me finish by highlighting some significant IUPAT campaigns: our successful governor races with the election of O'Malley (Maryland), Gregoire (Washington), Strickland (Ohio), Corzine (New Jersey), and, recently, Governor Nixon in Missouri and Senators Lautenberg (New Jersey), Warner (Virginia), and Cardin (Maryland).

In California, the defeat of a host of anti-union ballot initiatives. Stopping a right-to-work initiative in Kentucky. There are many more, but most important of all: the recent election of our 44th president, Barack Obama, and our dear friend, Vice President (Joe) Biden.

What's in the future? The hiring of full-time state lobbyists and the continued growth of full-time political directors in our district councils.

New communication vehicles, like the Omnibus that we launched during the presidential campaign to keep our

members up to date and in action on all current events relevant to them.

But one of the most important things we must work to make happen in, hopefully, our near future, is to grow the ranks of our member candidates—our homegrown candidates.

As fulfilling as it is to watch a candidate we support win, it is so much greater when that candidate is an IUPAT member as well, (such as) Liz Crowley, a District Council 9 member who was just elected as a New York city councilwoman. Nelson Thompson, a District Council 711 member who was elected as a Cumberland County freeholder in New Jersey. Just recently, Clay Rodgers announced his candidacy for an open seat in the Missouri House. And, in DC 9, Jeff Stark is running for a local county supervisor seat. DC 53 member Dan Poling is up for reelection for his state house seat.

We need more and more of our membership to do what they did, like DC 50's Nat Kinney, who ran for city council in Honolulu. Those of you who seek office can rest assured that the full support of the famous Black and Gold Army will be behind you.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't mention and thank the staff of the Government Affairs Department, past and present. This includes Sean McGarvey, Michael Monroe, and Jack Hayn, whose recent appointment as the brotherhood's AFL-CIO liaison will strengthen our leadership role within the AFL-CIO. To those who serve on today's staff: Steve Havens, Rod Hogevedt, Nelson Thompson, Chris Sloan, Charlotte Jenkins, and Jocelyn Reynolds.

It has been our honor to help and serve the membership of the IUPAT today.

Thank you, and see you all at the next rally!