

NC STATE AFL-CIO Labor Legislative Conference



I want to thank this membership for sending me as a delegate to the NC State AFL-CIO Legislative Conference in Raleigh on February 12th.

We spent the beginning of the day discussing topics as well as the process of lobbying the General Assembly. Next it was on to lobbying. One of the most important tasks we can do as Labor advocates is to lobby our elected officials. It is a necessary function for us to reach out and explain our issues, our agenda and to teach them the needs of labor and unions.

In order to have a useful discussion and successful lobby session we need to learn about the politicians we are meeting. It is important to know where they stand, what they campaigned for and what committees they sit on. Conversations help us to get to know them and learn what they are talking about and actions taken.

No matter what we learn about any of the lawmakers we must speak to all legislators. It is my personal priority as well as the AFL-CIO to always put policy over party. As a delegate to the AFL-CIO and as a representative to LL1725 I make sure to remain non-partisan. I speak to all elected representatives no matter their party or affiliations. Though there may be struggles and disagreements I have found that we have more common goals than we thought. My goal in lobbying is to speak of the people I represent. I want our lawmakers to know who we are as a union, as workers and as voters. I want them to

understand how they can help and what we need to accomplish for all workers.

I did notice a major difference in the air of the general assembly on this lobbying visit. Due to the election results in November, the super majority was broken. This meant there were a few more lawmakers in the building that were friendlier and pleased to see us there. I honestly believe when you have a balanced, equal number of party members in the general assembly it is a good thing for all of North Carolina. I hope this means they have to work together and remember and understand they are elected to work for the people of this state. One can always hope.

As a union representative and a delegate to the AFL-CIO I have to remain unwavering in my commitment to fight for a more just society for all working people. It is only in our solidarity of all labor, union and unrepresented workers collectively working together that we will advance the needs, conditions, and lives of all workers throughout this state.

It is important as union members that we contact our elected lawmakers. It is only in reaching out and promoting our needs that they will understand. Our silence and lack of involvement tells them we are happy with what is being done. I don't know about you but I am not happy with the current state of the "right to work" in NC. Yes, we are under the Railway Labor Act which means we are not impacted by the "right to work" rules. However there is a bill out there and I am sure it is not dead but will be pushed by some lawmakers to make "right to work" a federal law and then we will be impacted.

Under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), most workers who work in the private sector have the freedom to join together in unions. Once a union is certified as the exclusive representative, the employer must negotiate in good faith with that union for a contract. The union and the employer can decide to include in the contract, that all employees covered by the contract must pay their fair share of costs of

negotiating and administering said contract. Under such provisions, no employee must join the union, but all must pay their fair share of the costs.

In 1947, the NLRA was amended to allow states to prohibit such contract provisions that require employees to pay their fair shares or any fees at all for the services of the union. North Carolina was one of the first states to pass such a law. The union in such states must nevertheless represent those employees who refuse to pay their fair share. "Free Riders" is a term to describe these employees who do not pay their fair share of costs but yet continue to take the benefits and pass the cost to others.

A national "right to work" law would amend the NLRA and the Railway Labor Act (RLA) to repeal the provisions that permit employers or labor organizations, to require employees to join a union as a condition to employment.

My main focus was on raising the issue of the so called "right to work" law. All of us should be, need to be, contacting the elected representatives to make sure they stand with US, and against "right to work" laws

Visiting with lawmakers is the most effective way to educate them on our issues. Meeting, is not the only way to reach out. Write a handwritten letter, email, or even call your elected senators and representatives. By some means reach out and ask them to vote a certain way or take a certain action or just to let them know what you expect. Meeting with our lawmakers is our right! Again I cannot stress enough the need and importance for all of us to get involved in contacting our lawmakers.

Before and after lobbying, the delegates had discussions on issues, processes and success or lack of, our visits with the general assembly. There were many different unions and affiliations in attendance for the lobbying. We remained solid in our lobbying efforts to promote the agenda to improve the

lives of workers.

As always it is an honor to serve and represent this local.

In Solidarity

Maureen Kelly

MNPL Committee Chair

Here are some pictures from the conference!

(Click on thumbnails for full size images)



Delegates with NC State Senator Mujstaba Mohammed



Delegates with State Senator Natasha Marcus



Governor Roy Cooper speaking at the conference



Photo op with Governor Toy Cooper and UAW Brother Ed Maddox