



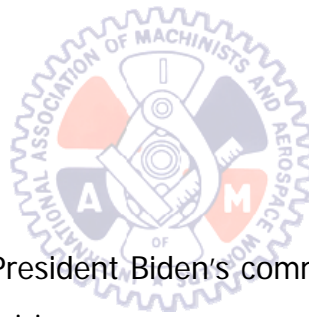
Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis -- A Shining Star and a Ray of Hope

These Are Encouraging Times For The American Worker!

You may be asking yourself, 'Given the devastating current economic conditions and hemorrhaging of jobs, how on earth could the Machinists' Union post a web article with the above title.' We can post such an article because of the recent installation of Hilda Solis as Department of Labor Secretary. During the last eight years, it's as if labor has been in a deep dark tunnel running into obstacles while being repeatedly sucker punched by the very organization who was supposed to protect and guide us. On the day Hilda Solis became nominated for Secretary of Labor, we could see a faint light at the end of that tunnel. As her confirmation drew closer and more of her record was revealed, that light became brighter and brighter.

Just look at remarks made by Vice President Biden at Hilda Solis' Department of Labor Swearing In-Ceremony and see if you don't get encouraged as well!

"Hilda is the daughter of blue collar union members . . . She knows how hard people work. She knows how tough things can be . . . Things like fairness in the workplace and workplace safety are not just idle phrases that are to be debated in Hilda's mind. They're real concerns that people face every single day. She knows that a job is more than about a paycheck . . . A job is about dignity. A job is about respect. Hilda understands that . . . When she held hearings on sweatshops, she was heard . . . And in Congress, when she stood up, she stood up to level the playing field for workers who wanted to organize, she was heard . . . Ladies and gentlemen, why do I repeat that phrase? We have not heard much from this Department in a long time . . . She's prepared to fight. She knows what it takes to get things done. . . When it comes to standing up for those who are in the workplace every day – for their health, their safety, for fair treatment – she's always there. When it comes to standing up for healthcare to protect families, she's always been there to fight for them. When it comes to retirement security she has fought and will continue to fight for people. And when it comes to standing up against job discrimination, she will have none of it. And so, ladies and gentlemen, when it comes to standing up for expanding this economy for all people, no one is going to be a stronger voice than the new Secretary of Labor."



As encouraging as Vice President Biden's comments were, Secretary Solis' response was just as promising. . .

I am more eager than ever to serve the American *people* [emphasis added] and to lead the Department in creating opportunities for *hard-working families* to achieve the American dream . . . Let me extend my thanks to the union leaders who have joined us this morning . . . It's a pleasure to have you here and let me say publically and personally and without reservation: You are a very, very important part of what I will be doing in the next few years . . . My father worked hard as a union shop steward in a battery recycling plant for over 25 years. His membership in the union helped my family have health and other benefits, in hard times . . . [my mother] worked in a local toy factory where she was also part of a union . . . I have visited fields and factories. I have even walked picket lines. . . I am a product – and I'm proud of this – of the women's movement, the labor movement, the environmental movement and the social justice movement."

When setting out her vision for the Department of Labor, Secretary Solis set forth this important agenda:

- 1.) Giving Americans the tools they need to find and keep good jobs must be the Department's priority. The Department must help workers by prioritizing job training and assistance. Retooling the work force not only helps workers, but supports high growth industries by ensuring they have the adequate skills workers need. She also emphasized working closely with the President to re-invest in and restructure workforce development and to ensure a strong unemployment insurance system.
- 2.) The Labor Department must ensure American workers are paid what they deserve, are treated fairly and have safe and healthy workplaces . . . "To those who have, for far too long, abused workers, put them in harm's way, denied them fair pay, let me be clear: There is a new sheriff in town."

By her own admission, Secretary Hilda Solis, "considers human resources to be America's greatest asset."

<http://www.dol.gov/dol/media/webcast/ceremony-transcript.htm>



True to her promises, Secretary Solis' Department of Labor announced the following help for those most affected by our current disastrous economy - - the laid off worker:

2/26/09	\$2 million to assist auto industry workers in Missouri
2/26/09	\$880,000 to assist gaming industry workers in Connecticut
2/26/09	\$500,000 grant to assist workers in Louisiana affected by paper industry layoffs
3/19/09	\$877,000 to assist workers in Oregon affected by motor home industry layoffs
3/27/09	\$987,000 grant to assist workers in Oregon affected by computer-industry layoffs
3/27/09	\$329,000 to assist workers in Oregon affected by wood products industry layoffs
3/31/09	\$757,000 to assist workers in Missouri affected by airline layoffs
3/31/09	Grant exceeding \$8 million to assist workers in Ohio affected by recent automobile industry layoffs
3/31/09	Grant exceeding \$254,000 to assist workers affected by paper industry layoffs in Maine
4/2/09	Grant of more than \$2.4 million to assist workers in Missouri affected by layoffs

<http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/opa/>

In less than two short months, it has become evident that the light at the end of the tunnel is a bright and shining star - - Hilda Solis. It is always easy to give lip service to individuals who are going through difficult times - - to say that you empathize with what they are going through, but when you have actually *walked* in someone shoes as Hilda Solis has, and experienced the day to day struggles that working families face, it gives a whole different perspective; a burning desire to drastically change things permanently for the better.

"The Machinists Union would like to extend a warm welcome to Labor's bright and shining star. Not only do we attentively look forward to all the positive changes Secretary Solis will make for each and every worker, but we the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, offer our resources to help her on this important mission.

We will have disagreements; however, we don't believe they will be philosophical differences but rather the process used to resolve these issues."

- R. Thomas Buffenbarger, International President