

Congressman George Miller

# Making a Difference for Working Americans

Elections do make a difference. If your child's college loan costs are now more affordable or if someone you know working for minimum wage got a raise, you can thank House Committee on Education and Labor Chairman Representative George Miller of California, who became Chairman after the Democratic election victory in 2006.

Miller's Education and Labor Committee has jurisdiction over a host of issues that directly affect working families, including education, job training, health care, retirement security, the right to organize and workplace safety.

From his first day as Chairman, Miller has made strengthening America's middle class families a top priority. After just one year, the Committee's accomplishments are impressive: raising the minimum wage, cutting interest rates on student loans by half, making the largest investment in education since the GI Bill and winning passage of the Employee Free Choice Act in the House.

In an interview with the *IAM Journal*, Miller spoke about his first year as Chairman.



*As Chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, Representative George Miller (D-CA) followed through on his pledge to help working families by making college more affordable, raising the minimum wage, protecting pensions and passing the Employee Free Choice Act in the House.*

## **IAM Journal: Can you summarize your first year as Chairman?**

**Miller:** I think we've had some great accomplishments. We reported out the Employee Free Choice Act. It protects the rights of people who want to organize a workplace to be able to organize it without intimidation.

We raised the minimum wage for the people who are working at the most difficult jobs in this country at the lowest wages. We addressed the concerns of families and students who are struggling to finance their college educa-

tion. We cut the student loan interest rates in half and we increased Pell grants. And for people who go into public service, we'll provide them loan forgiveness after ten years.

Health care would dramatically change the economic status of a lot of middle-class individuals and lower-income individuals if they had a secure, universal health care plan for them and for their children.

This year in the House, we passed health care for ten million children of working families who don't make enough money to have health insurance for their kids.

The President vetoed it, but we're not letting him get away with it. So it's been an exciting first year for the Committee on Education and Labor.

**IAM Journal: How are you protecting traditional defined benefit plans?**

**Miller:** We're working very hard to make sure that defined benefit plans for workers who have them are secure. Pensions belong to the workers, they just can't be the playground of corporate boards.

We're also deeply concerned, as we saw on the United case, where a company was able to go to bankruptcy court and dismiss those benefit plans.

When United emerged as a new company, the employees woke up with a pension plan that was either gone, or reduced in the case of

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**George Miller, Chairman**  
House Education and Labor Committee

retirees, and their futures were devastated. That cannot be allowed to happen again.

**IAM Journal: How can we ensure adequate vocational training for kids who don't go on to a four-year college?**

**Miller:** We've got to integrate the idea of vocational education and career training into our elementary and secondary system so that when students graduate from high school, they can make a choice to go into the workplace with the necessary skills, or go to college.

That's what our Innovation Agenda has been about. That's what the re-write of No Child Left Behind is about, to make sure that kids will be ready to take their place with American manufacturing, American jobs, American ideas and American products.

We've also got to quit providing subsidies for companies to leave this country and do manufacturing overseas.

**IAM Journal: You returned the word "Labor" to the Committee's title. Why?**

**Miller:** We want to make sure that the union movement grows and prospers because most of the gains that have come to America's middle class are because of organized labor.

We think there's a dynamic and honorable history of labor unions in this country, and we want the name of the Committee to reflect that.



Bill Burke, Page One Photography

*A good friend of working families, Rep. George Miller spoke at the 2007 IAM Day of Action in Washington, D.C.*