

# Organizing Coast-to-Coast

Despite the worst economy in decades, the IAM continues to provide workers with a voice on the job and a better standard of living with organizing efforts from the far corners of the Pacific Northwest to the Caribbean.

## Growing Presence in Puerto Rico

IAM membership dramatically increased in Puerto Rico with a string of organizing wins starting with 141 workers from Frito Lay/PepsiCo.

"Puerto Rico has a strong labor movement," said IAM Local 2725 Organizer José "Lole" Rodríguez-Báez. "The

Frito Lay workers had been searching for a strong union to affiliate with. The Machinists Union – better known here as the 'Maquinistas' – was a perfect fit."

After several meetings and discussions with IAM representatives, the workers overwhelmingly chose the Machinists Union. A union election, overseen by the Department of Labor of Puerto Rico, followed. By a near-unanimous vote, the Frito Lay workers became "Maquinistas."

Soon after, 58 new members from Cristalia Premium Water Company in Carolina and Ponce, and

seven maintenance workers from Isleta Marina, a condominium complex in Fajardo, also voted to join the IAM.

"Expanding the IAM's reach in Puerto Rico is good news for all our members there, as our increased numbers give the Commonwealth a strong, vibrant IAM presence," said IAM Southern Territory General Vice President Bob Martinez. "We're committed to increasing our membership in Puerto Rico. This is just the beginning."

## On to Washington

When some 220 civilian



*Employees from the Frito Lay/PepsiCo facility in Puerto Rico celebrate after affiliating with the Machinists Union. Soon after, workers at Cristalia Premium Water Company and maintenance workers from Isleta Marina voted to join the IAM.*



*After a year-long effort to join the IAM, employees of defense contractor URS at Whidbey Island Naval Air Station celebrate their victory and prepare for upcoming contract negotiations.*

workers at Whidbey Island Naval Air Station in Oak Harbor, WA, needed help bringing their pay in line with what other workers in Western Washington were being paid for similar work, they contacted IAM District Lodge 751.

The workers are employed by defense contractor URS. District 751 has a proven track record of negotiating better wages and benefits for civilian employees at Washington military bases under the Service Contract Act, the federal law that governs union contracts for private defense contractors.

### **Contract Preparation**

"We have highly-skilled members who do work that's essential for America's defense," said District 751 President Tom Wroblewski. "That made an impression on the URS workers. They deserve to be paid and treat-

ed fairly. And they recognized the value of a Machinists Union contract."

After a year-long effort working with District 751's organizing program, the URS workers voted to join the IAM in December. They are now on track to negotiate a first contract.

"IAM representation ensures that workers in the Service Contract industry have fair and equitable pay, benefits and working conditions," said IAM Western Territory General Vice President Gary Allen. "This is a huge win for working families in Washington state."



*After every organizing win, workers submit proposals for what they want in their first contract and select negotiating committee representatives. From left, URS member David Marshall, District 751 Business Representatives Ron Bradley and Jon Holden and Steward Coordinator Ed Lutgen go over proposals from new members at URS.*