

GROWING & STRENGTHENING AMERICA'S MIDDLE CLASS

EDUCATION & LABOR LEGISLATIVE VICTORIES



110TH CONGRESS

**THE HONORABLE GEORGE MILLER
CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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Education and Labor Legislative Victories

Education and Labor Committee Members have worked hard in the 110th Congress to protect America's middle class, getting key measures passed through the House and signed into law.

- ✓ **Making College More Affordable And Accessible**
- ✓ **Enhancing Early Childhood Education**
- ✓ **Stopping Child Abuse At Private and Public Residential Programs For Teens**
- ✓ **Preserving Workers' Wages**
- ✓ **Preserving Workers' Rights**
- ✓ **Preserving Workplace Safety**
- ✓ **Preserving Workers' Health Coverage**
- ✓ **Preserving Retirement Security**
- ✓ **Strengthening the Economy Through Innovation**

And So Many More Successes...

For a Full List of Education & Labor Legislative Victories, See the Chart at the End of This Pamphlet

MAKING COLLEGE MORE AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE

Providing the Single Largest Increase in College Aid since the GI Bill (Signed Into Law)

The College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007, approved by the House on July 11, 2007 by a vote of 273-149 and signed into law on September 27, 2007, provides **the single largest increase in college aid since the GI bill** – roughly \$20 billion over the next five years. And it does so **at no new cost to taxpayers**. Under the law, 6.8 million students who take out need-based federal student loans each



year will see the interest rates on their loans halved over the next five years, saving the typical borrower (with \$13,800 in need-based loan debt) \$4,400 over the life of the loan, once fully implemented.

The bill also boosts maximum Pell Grant scholarships to \$5,400 over the next five years, up from \$4,050 in 2006, provides loan forgiveness for public service members, like nurses, police officers, firefighters, and first responders, makes loan payments more manageable, and gives upfront tuition assistance to students who commit to teaching in high-need public schools.

Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans for American Families (Signed Into Law)

On May 7, 2008, the Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act of 2008 was signed into law after the House twice overwhelmingly passed the measure – first, on April 17, 2008 by a vote of 383-27, and then on May 1, 2008 agreeing to Senate amendments by a vote of 388-21. This law provides new protections, in addition to those already under current law, to ensure that families continue to have timely, uninterrupted access to federal college loans in the event that

stress in the credit markets leads a significant number of lenders in the federally guaranteed student loan programs to substantially reduce their lending activity. The bill, which carries no additional cost for taxpayers: reduces borrowers' reliance on costlier private college loans and encourages responsible borrowing; gives parent borrowers more time to begin paying off their federal PLUS college loans; helps struggling homeowners pay for college; and provides the U.S. Secretary of Education additional tools to safeguard access to student loans.

Expanding College Access for Students and Families (Signed Into Law)

On July 31, 2008, the House passed the Higher Education Opportunity Act by a vote of 380-49; it was signed into law on August 14, 2008. The legislation will address the rising price of college by encouraging colleges to rein in price increases, clean up corrupt practices in student loan programs and streamline the federal financial aid application process. The bill also addresses textbook costs and increases college aid and support programs for veterans and military families. In 2007, the House passed the Student Loan Sunshine Act and the Pell Grant Equity Act, which are both included in the Higher Education Opportunity Act.

ENHANCING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Improving School Readiness (Signed Into Law)

On November 14, 2007, by a vote of 381-36, the House passed the conference report for the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, which was later signed into law on December 12, 2007.

Head Start has been the premiere early education program in this country for more than 40 years, serving more than 20 million children in that time. The



legislation helps more children arrive at school ready to succeed by improving teacher and classroom quality, expanding access to Head Start for more children, improving comprehensive services for children in Head Start and their families, and ensuring that taxpayer dollars only fund Head Start centers that are well-run and high-quality.

STOPPING CHILD ABUSE AT RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS FOR TEENS

Keeping Kids Safe (Passed by Committee)

The House passed the Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act of 2008 on June 25, 2008 by a vote of 318-103. It is estimated that tens of thousands of U.S. teenagers attend private and public residential programs – including therapeutic boarding schools, wilderness camps, boot camps, and behavior modification facilities – that are intended to help them with behavioral, emotional, or mental health problems. The Government Accountability Office found thousands of allegations of child abuse and neglect at residential programs for teens between 1994 and 2007. Tragically, in a number of cases, this abuse and neglect led to the death of a child. To address this urgent problem, this measure would keep teens safe with new national standards for private and public residential programs, prevent deceptive marketing by residential programs for teens, hold teen residential programs accountable for violating the law, and ask states to step in to protect teens in these programs.

PRESERVING WORKERS' WAGES

Increasing the Minimum Wage (Signed Into Law)

After 10 years of no action, the 110th Congress approved the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007 to provide a minimum wage boost for the lowest paid 13 million Americans with a

bipartisan vote of 315-116 on January 10, 2007. It was signed into law on May 25, 2007 as part of an emergency supplemental appropriations bill. The Act increases the minimum wage from \$5.15 per hour to \$7.25 per hour over two years. The first two steps in that increase have already taken effect, bringing the minimum wage to \$6.55 as of July 24, 2008.



Sen. Edward Kennedy, Rep. George Miller and other lawmakers call for a minimum wage increase.

Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act: Ensuring that Victims of Pay Discrimination Are Treated Fairly (Passed by House)



Lilly Ledbetter testifies before the Committee.

On July 31, 2007, the House passed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act by 225-199 to overturn a Supreme Court ruling that made it harder for workers to pursue pay discrimination claims. The legislation is named after Lilly Ledbetter, whose pay discrimination claim was denied by a 5-4 Supreme Court decision on May 29, 2007. The court said she had waited too long to sue for pay discrimination, despite the fact that she filed a charge with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as soon as she received an anonymous note alerting her to pay discrimination. The court ruled that since she did not raise a claim within 180 days of the employer's decision to discriminate, she could not receive back pay. The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act would clarify that every paycheck or other compensation resulting, in whole or in part, from an earlier discriminatory pay decision constitutes a violation of the Civil Rights Act. The legislation would also make it clear that employees who are victims of

discrimination are entitled to up to two years of back pay, as already provided in the Civil Rights Act.

Paycheck Fairness Act (Passed by House)

On July 31, 2008, the House passed the Paycheck Fairness Act by a vote of 247-178 to help end the discriminatory practice of paying men and women unequally for performing the same job. Loopholes created by courts and weak sanctions in the law have allowed many employers to avoid liability for engaging in gender-based pay discrimination. The bill, which was introduced by Rep. Rosa DeLauro, will strengthen the Equal Pay Act and close the loopholes that have allowed employers to avoid responsibility for discriminatory pay.

PRESERVING WORKERS' RIGHTS

Employee Free Choice Act: Protecting Workers' Rights (Passed by House)

On March 1, 2007, the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) passed the House, 241-185. The bill would enable workers to bargain for better wages, benefits, and working conditions by restoring their rights to form unions. A key part of House Democrats' overall goal of strengthening America's middle class, the bill would reform a broken union election process in which employers frequently intimidate, harass, reassign, or even fire workers who support the formation of a union.

Extending Collective Bargaining Rights to Public Safety Workers in All 50 States (Passed by House)

By an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote of 314-97, the House on July 17, 2007 approved the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act of 2007 to guarantee the rights



Speaker Pelosi, Rep. Miller and public safety workers applaud the passage of collective bargaining legislation.

of firefighters, police officers, and emergency medical service workers in all 50 states to collectively bargain for better wages, benefits and working conditions. The bill would provide basic labor protections for state and local public safety workers, including: 1) the right to join a union; 2) the right to have their union recognized by their employer; 3) the right to bargain collectively over hours, wages and terms and conditions of employment; 4) a mediation or arbitration process for resolving an impasse in negotiations; and 5) enforcement of the bill's provisions through the courts.

ADA Amendments Act (Passed by House)

On June 25, 2008, the House passed the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 by a vote of 402-17 to stop discrimination against individuals with disabilities by restoring the original intent of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This bipartisan legislation will reverse several U.S. Supreme Court decisions that have undermined the Americans with Disabilities Act. Since the ADA's enactment nearly two decades ago, courts have dramatically reduced the numbers of workers who are protected from employment discrimination under the law.

Employment Non-Discrimination Act (Passed by House)

On November 7, 2007, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act passed the House by a vote of 235 to 184. The legislation would prohibit employment discrimination, preferential treatment, and retaliation on the basis of sexual orientation by



employers with 15 or more employees. Thirty states permit employers to fire employees based solely on their sexual orientation.

PRESERVING WORKPLACE SAFETY

Making Work Safer for Miners (Passed by House)

On January 16, 2008, by a vote of 214-199, the House passed the Supplementary Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act (S-MINER) to help prevent mining disasters, improve emergency response when disasters do occur, and reduce long-term health risks, such as black lung disease, facing miners. Mining remains one of the most dangerous occupations in America, with a fatality rate more than seven times higher than the average for all private industries. The measure builds on legislation signed into law in 2006 by addressing serious gaps in mine safety and health standards.

Protecting Food Flavoring Workers from Severe Lung Disease “Popcorn Lung” (Passed by House)

On September 26, 2007, the House voted 260-154 for the Popcorn Workers Lung Disease Prevention Act to force the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to act to protect workers at food processing plants from exposure to diacetyl, an artificial food flavoring chemical commonly used in microwave popcorn. Diacetyl has been linked to bronchiolitis obliterans, also known as “popcorn lung,” a severe, irreversible lung disease that has sickened and killed a number of workers nationwide.



Eric Peoples, a victim of popcorn lung, testifies before the committee.

Preventing Combustible Dust Explosions (Passed by House)

The Worker Protection Against Combustible Dust Explosion and Fire Act, passed by the House on April 30, 2008 by a vote of 247-165, would require the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue rules regulating combustible industrial dusts, like sugar dust, that can build up to hazardous levels and explode. In early February, combustible sugar dust exploded at the Imperial Sugar refinery in Port Wentworth, Georgia, killing 13 workers and severely injuring many more. OSHA has known about these dangers for years, but has failed to act. The Chemical Safety Board urged OSHA in 2006 to issue rules controlling dust hazards, but OSHA has never offered any indication that it is planning to issue such rules.

PRESERVING WORKERS’ HEALTH COVERAGE

Giving Americans Better Access to Treatment through Mental Health Parity (Passed by House)

On March 5, 2008, the House passed the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act, 268-148, to ensure better access to treatment for people suffering from mental illnesses. The bipartisan legislation would require group health insurance plans to put coverage for mental illnesses on equal footing with physical ailments. Private health insurers generally provide less coverage for mental illnesses than for other medical conditions.

Preventing Genetic Discrimination (Signed Into Law)

The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2007 (GINA) was signed into law on May 21, 2008 after the

House passed it on April 25, 2007, by a vote of 420-3. GINA protects personal genetic information from discriminatory use by health insurers and employers. The bipartisan measure prohibits employers from using individuals' genetic information when making hiring, firing, job placement or promotion decisions. It also makes it illegal for group health plans and health insurers to deny coverage to healthy individuals or charge them higher premiums based solely on a genetic predisposition to a specific disease.

PRESERVING RETIREMENT SECURITY

Making Sure Workers Have Information on 401(k) Fees ***(Passed by Committee)***

On April 16, 2008, the Committee passed the 401(k) Fair Disclosure for Retirement Security Act by a vote of 25-19. This measure would ensure that American workers have clear and complete information about fees that could be cutting deeply into their 401(k)-style retirement savings. Roughly 50 million American workers have 401(k)-style plans. The vast majority of these workers report that they do not know how much they are paying in fees to the companies that service their 401(k) plans, despite the fact that, over a career, these fees can greatly reduce workers' retirement account balances. A 1-percentage-point difference in fees can reduce a worker's 401(k) account balance by as much as 20 percent or more over a career.

STRENGTHENING THE ECONOMY THROUGH INNOVATION

The 21st Century Competitiveness Act ***(Signed Into Law)***

The 21st Century Competitiveness Act was signed into law on August 8, 2007 and makes major investments in

education and job training programs to help encourage America's innovative spirit and strengthen the nation's economic competitiveness. The law, which was passed by the House on August 2, 2007 by a vote of 367-57, will provide training programs for students who want to enter into science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) career paths, create programs to enhance teacher education in the STEM fields, and place highly qualified teachers in high-need schools.

MORE LEGISLATIVE VICTORIES

Signed Into Law:

- ✓ Providing Leave Time to Military Families: Included in the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2008
- ✓ Preparing Workers for "Green Collar" Jobs to Fight Global Warming: Green Jobs Act of 2007 (included in energy bill)
- ✓ Aid to Gulf Coast Area Schools: Included in disaster supplemental bill
- ✓ Keeping Children and Communities Safe: Protecting Our Children Comes First Act
- ✓ Increasing Penalties on Child Labor Law Violators: Child Labor Protection Act

Passed by House:

- ✓ Renovating & Repairing Schools, Modernizing America's School Facilities: 21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facilities Act
- ✓ Preserving Davis-Bacon Protections
- ✓ Ensuring Family and Medical Leave for Flight Attendants and Airline Pilots: Airline Flight Crew Technical Corrections Act

- ✓ Assisting Workers Affected by International Trade: Early Warning and Health Care for Workers Affected by Globalization Act (Included in the Trade and Globalization Act of 2007)
- ✓ Reining in Unscrupulous Foreign Labor Recruiters: Included in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act

Passed by Committee:

- ✓ Restoring Bargaining Rights to Skilled Professional and Trades Workers: Re-Empowerment of Skilled and Professional Employees and Construction Tradesworkers (RESPECT) Act
- ✓ Improving the Quality of State Pre-School Programs: Providing Resources Early for Kids Act
- ✓ Improving Environmental Education for Schoolchildren: No Child Left Inside Act
- ✓ Expanding Access to Early Childhood Home Visits: Education Begins at Home Act
- ✓ Renewing and Improving National Community Service and Volunteer Programs: Generations Invigorating Volunteerism and Education (GIVE) Act

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EDUCATION & LABOR LEGISLATION

Signed Into Law:

Bill	Date Signed	Date Passed House
Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007	May 25, 2007	January 10, 2007 315-116
Aid to Gulf Coast Area Schools (as part of disaster supplemental bill)	May 25, 2007	May 10, 2007 221-205
21 st Century Competitiveness Act	August 8, 2007	August 2, 2007 367-57
College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007	September 27, 2007	July 11, 2007 273-149
Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007	December 12, 2007	November 14, 2007 381-36
Green Jobs Act of 2007 (as part of energy bill)	December 19, 2007	December 6, 2007 235-181
Leave Time for Military Families (as part of FY 2008 Defense Auth.)	January 28, 2008	January 16, 2008 369-46
Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act of 2008	May 7, 2008	April 17, 2008, 383-27 May 1, 2008, 388-21
Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2007	May 21, 2008	April 25, 2007, 420-3 May 1, 2008, 414-1
Child Labor Protection Act of 2007	May 21, 2008	June 12, 2007, Voice vote May 1, 2008, 414-1 (as part of GINA)
Protecting Our Children Comes First Act	June 3, 2008	December 5, 2007 408-3
Higher Education Opportunity Act (Formerly the College Opportunity & Affordability Act)	August 14, 2008	July 31, 2008 (conference report), 380-49 February 7, 2008, 354-58

Passed by House:

Bill	Date Passed	Vote Tally
Pell Grant Equity Act	February 27, 2007	Voice vote
Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA)	March 1, 2007	241-185
Student Loan Sunshine Act	May 9, 2007	414-3
National STEM Scholarship Database Act	June 6, 2007	Voice vote
Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act of 2007	July 17, 2007	314-97
Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act	July 31, 2007	225-199
Popcorn Workers Lung Disease Prevention Act	September 26, 2007	260-154
Early Warning and Health Care for Workers Affected by Globalization Act & COBRA measure (as part of the Trade and Globalization Assistance Act)	October 31, 2007	264-157

Bill	Date Passed	Vote Tally
Employment Non-Discrimination Act	November 7, 2007	235-184
Recruiter bill (as part of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act)	December 4, 2007	405-2
Supplementary Mine Improvement & New Emergency Response (S-MINER) Act	January 16, 2008	214-199
Paul Wellstone Mental Health & Addiction Equity Act	March 5, 2008	268-148
Worker Protection Against Combustible Dust Explosion and Fires Act	April 30, 2008	247-165
The Airline Flight Crew Technical Corrections Act	May 20, 2008	402-9
21 st Century Green High-Performing School Facilities Act	June 4, 2008	250-164
ADA Amendments Act	June 25, 2008	401-17
Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act of 2008	June 25, 2008	318-103
Paycheck Fairness Act	July 31, 2008	247-178

Passed by Committee:

Bill	Date Passed	Vote Tally
Generations Invigorating Volunteerism & Education (GIVE) Act	June 27, 2007	44-0
Re-Empowerment of Skilled and Professional Employees and Construction Tradesworkers (RESPECT) Act	September 19, 2007	26-20
401(k) Fair Disclosure for Retirement Security Act	April 16, 2008	25-19
No Child Left Inside Act	June 18, 2008	37-8
Education Begins at Home Act	June 18, 2008	Voice vote
Providing Resources Early for Kids Act	June 26, 2008	31-11

Education and Labor Committee Democrats

