

RETIREE

news & views



A PUBLICATION OF LOCAL 237 RETIREE DIVISION • VOL. 13 NO. 11 • NOVEMBER 2008

OBAMA WINS!

Change Has Come to America A Victory for All of Us

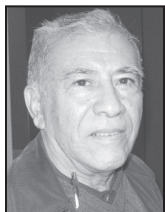
At 11 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on November 4, Senator Barack Obama, Democratic Party candidate for president of the United States, became President-elect Barack Obama. On January 20, Obama will become the nation's 44th president. People across the nation—and around the world—poured into the streets, cheering, crying, embracing friends, family, and even strangers.

Democratic candidates took six Senate seats held by Republicans (with three states still not decided at press time), giving the Democrats a majority of at least 57. Democrats will control the House, the Senate, and the White House for the first time since 1995.

Retired NYCHA teller supervisor Irma Rabinowitz was thrilled. "I think Obama is the greatest thing since unions," she said. "When I saw how people turned out for him, it was a wonderful sight. When he won, even men were crying. Jessie Jackson on TV. I was up watching until 1 a.m.; no one went to sleep." She added, "He's soft-spoken, but when he gets up to speak, the walls made noises."



Cristobal Bermudez, a retired NYCHA maintenance worker, said, "We're all filled with joy, including people outside this country. I think Obama's election is good for all of America. Everyone who worked for him made history. It's very important. People don't care about color because of the problems they face today. The big thing now is to focus on the economy, then health, education, and his other programs—jobs, energy. Many things will change, but it will take time."

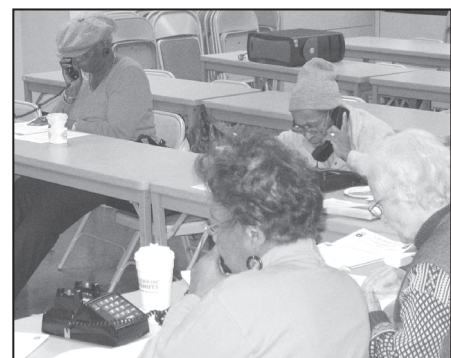
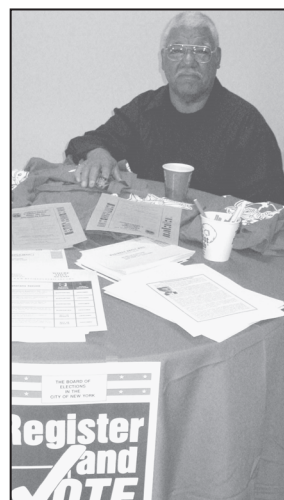


The Union Difference

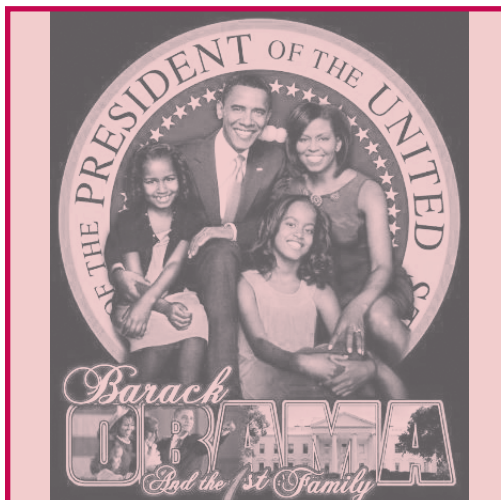
The popular vote, 52 percent for Obama to 45 percent for Senator John McCain, was a powerful repudiation of an unpopular president and his economic and foreign policies. Obama is the first Democrat since Jimmy Carter in 1976 to win more than 50 percent of the popular vote.

Among union members, support for Obama was even greater: 67 percent to 30 percent for McCain. In the battleground states, due to a massive voter education and mobilization campaign by the labor movement, union members went for Obama 69-28 over McCain, a 41-point margin. And among voters 65 and over, working and retired union members voted for Obama over McCain by a 46-point margin, 72 to 28, compared to voters that age in the general population, who voted for McCain by 53 to 45.

Unions made the difference.



Local 237 retirees did voter registration and phone banking. They urged their families and friends to vote for Obama. They marched and rallied, and whatever else they could to elect Barack Obama and Joe Biden to the White House and friends to Congress.



PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

Doesn't that have a great ring to it? What a great victory!

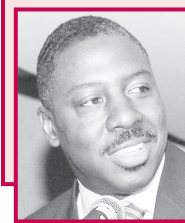
The American people elected as president a man who just 143 years ago could have been legally owned as a slave because of the color of his skin. People of all ages, races, nationalities, religions, income levels, and stations united to repudiate eight years of Bush administration policies in favor of peace, jobs and economic justice, health care for all, and democracy.

The labor movement can be proud of our role in this victory. I especially want to thank Local 237 members and retirees for their efforts. It's hard to find in the mainstream media, but there are areas, especially in the key battleground states of Ohio, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Michigan, and others, where unions made the difference.

Consider this: While the popular vote for Obama was 52 to 45 for McCain, among union members, support was 67 percent for Obama to 30 percent for McCain. In the battleground states, where the labor movement focused its efforts, union members went for Obama 69-28 over McCain, a 41-point margin.

And, incredibly, while voters 65 and over in the general population went for McCain by 53 to 45, working and retired union members 65 and over voted for Obama over McCain by a 46-point margin, 72 percent to 28. The Alliance for Retired Americans, working with labor, deserves a lot of credit for that.

Victory also carried over to Congressional races, as well. Democrats now have 57



A Message from the President

seats in the Senate—not the 60 filibuster-proof number we were hoping for, but excellent nevertheless.

Both Change to Win and the AFL-CIO carried out massive voter registration, education, mobilization, and get-out-the-vote campaigns. More than 250,000 union volunteers devoted time and energy to reaching out to fellow union members as well as non-union families. More than 10 million door knocks, 70 million phone calls, 27 million worksite fliers and 57 million union mail pieces made the difference in races from the White House to Congress to state legislatures.

I'm proud to report that the Teamsters organized more than 40,000 volunteers for member mobilization efforts. The Teamsters' get-out-the-vote effort included more than 2.6 million direct mail pieces, more than 1.6 million phone calls, more than 1 million Teamster job sites visited, and 4.5 million homes visited as part of Change to Win. Some 54,687 Teamsters signed up for election text messaging.

At Local 237, in addition to campaigning, we made our office available to the Obama campaign for phone banking.

Obama won nine states that went for Bush in 2004—including Florida, with its high percentage of retirees.

This victory would not have been possi-

ble with a traditional campaign organization alone. It required a movement, people telling people telling people through all kinds of avenues of communication—spontaneous but organized, and inspired by a great leader who created a sense of personal empowerment.

This combination will be needed to enact Obama's agenda for change in the months and years ahead.

The new Obama administration will be faced with a deepening recession, the loss of the nation's industrial base, massive deficits and a nearly \$10 trillion national debt, mounting unemployment, a health care crisis, climate change, two wars, and terrorism.

For the labor movement, passage of the Employee Free Choice Act is perhaps the greatest legislative challenge, leveling the playing field for workers seeking to organize and join unions. In the context of economic crisis and rising unemployment, working people need unions more than ever to ensure that steps are taken to rescue Main Street, not just Wall Street.

The EFCA passed the U.S. House and won majority support in the Senate in 2007, but a Republican minority blocked passage with a filibuster. Today, a larger majority in both houses has committed to support the bill when it comes up again, and Obama has promised to sign it if it is passed by Congress.

However, there may still be enough Republicans in the Senate to filibuster the EFCA. And corporate front groups, industry associations, and large corporations have made defeat of the EFCA their number one priority.

The entire union movement is committed to fighting for enactment of the EFCA in 2009.

We are entering the holiday season on the winds of a great victory—the election of Barack Obama and Joe Biden as president and vice president of the United States.

The Retiree Division called on retirees to join the campaign, and you responded, doing voter registration, phone banking, leaflet distribution, participating in marches and rallies, talking with family and friends.



Activism Must Continue

*By Nancy B. True
Director, Retiree Division*

Among the retirees who worked hard on this campaign were James Spicer, Helen Mashburn, Barbara Hazelwood, Cristobal Bermudez, Cejester Walker, Edith Montero, Elsie Ortiz, Pauline Rosenbaum, Shirley Hall, Lucille Eversley, Anthony Cottone, Doris Welch, Angel Rodriguez, Ruth Coaxum, June Harris, Alice Wade, Ruth Glover, Carolyn Whitley, Grace Klein, Walter Badyana, and many others.

You were part of a massive, nationwide movement for change that included men and women of all ages and backgrounds; black, white, Latino and Asian. People participated in traditional campaigning and in

new, technology-driven activities, such as text messaging, e-mail, and internet web sites like U-Tube.

We need to continue to be active. Obama said in his victory speech, "This victory alone is not the change we seek. It is only the chance for us to make that change. And that cannot happen if we go back to the way things were. It cannot happen without you."

There is much to be done. The American people have made clear what they want: repeal of President Bush's tax cuts for people with incomes over \$250,000, jobs, universal health care and strengthening of Medicare, preventing privatization of Social Security, funding for education, help for families faced with losing their homes, an end to the war in Iraq. The people have spoken out for change. But there are those who will oppose us. It is up to us to continue to participate in the political process.

Meanwhile, let's savor our victory. Have a great Thanksgiving.

RETIREE NEWS & VIEWS

Published monthly, except for July/August combined, by the Retiree Division of Local 237, International Brotherhood of Teamsters (USPS 013028) Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY. Postmaster: Send address changes to Retiree News & Views, 216 West 14 St., NY, NY 10011 • 212-807-0555 • retirees@local237.org • www.local237.org

GREGORY FLOYD
President

RICHARD HENDERSHOT
Vice President

RUBEN TORRES
Secretary-Treasurer

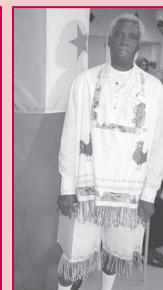
PATRICIA STRYKER
Recording Secretary

Nancy B. True
Managing Editor

Donna Ristorucci
Editor



Retirees Celebrate Latino Heritage Month ...



La Reina Carlotita Ayala and El Rey Winston Edwards (seated on their thrones), surrounded by their "Royal Court," the event's organizing committee (l-r) Elsie Ortiz, Edith Montero, Lea Vela, Jose Alicea, Rosa Alicea, Cristobal Bermudez, Retiree Division Deputy Director Winston George, 2007 King Anthony Cottone, Cejester Walker, Donaldo Castellar, and Retiree Division Director Nancy True. Committee members received an award certificate for their contribution.



...and Art Opening



Participants in the Retiree Division's Latino Heritage Celebration took time to view and toast a display of art work by students in the division's art class, taught by Karen Giordano, and photography class, taught by Adrienne Haywood-James.



Surrounded by flags and posters of Latin American countries, Local 237 retirees paid tribute to the contributions of Latinos at the Retiree Division's second Latino Heritage Month celebration held at union headquarters September 23. That evening, the union had a program for working members.

Retirees viewed cultural artifacts from Puerto Rico, Mexico, Panama, Colombia, Brazil, and other nations of Central and South America contributed by retirees whose families hail from those countries. They listened and danced to salsa and other Latino music by DJ Winston Almonte, and feasted on Latino fare, including homecooked contributions. A highlight was the crowning of "el rey y la reina" (king and queen), a ceremony popular in many Latin American countries.

Assemblymember Jose Peralta, who was introduced by Local 237 President Greg Floyd, was the event's "special guest." A first-generation Dominican American, Peralta represents the 39th Assembly District in Queens, described as a "United Nations" district because of the many nationalities who live there. Peralta hailed the "great strides" made by Latinos as an economic and political power but said that improvement is needed in the area of education. He stressed the importance of being involved in the political process to maximize their potential power and urged retirees to "step forward to support people like Barack Obama."



Report from a Local 237 Pennsylvania ARA Activist

Walter Badyna, III, the Retiree Division's representative on the board of the Pennsylvania Alliance for Retired Americans (PARA), was immersed in campaigning for Barack Obama as well as local candidates. He attended a PARA regional legislative conference in Dunmore, PA, in early October. Badyna reported:

The agenda covered candidates and issues for the November elections on both the national and state levels. PARA supports Obama for president and pointed out differences between Obama and John McCain on various issues. PARA also indicated regional support for PA congressional candidates Carney, Kanjorski, Hackett, and Barletta.

Other issues covered were Social Security, Medicare, health care costs, prescription drug costs, voter registration, and educating senior citizens and poor, low, and middle income citizens on the issues and getting them to vote.

Badyna also sent an announcement about the Change to Win Truth Squad, nine workers traveling through nine states to expose the truth about the consequences of McCain's policies for Americans. Dressed as "McCain Health Care Reapers," squad members held a "Health Care Funeral" in front of Republican headquarters in Scranton (photo, right).



Earlier, Badyna reported on PARA activities in support of H.R. 6331, the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008, which stopped scheduled payment cuts to doctors who treat Medicare patients and cut subsidies to private Medicare Advantage programs, among other provisions. The bill was passed by Congress in July over President Bush's veto:

PARA members, along with thousands of ARA members throughout the country, called, e-mailed, and wrote letters to their

elected officials to support the bill. Pennsylvania's Senator Arlen Specter voted against it. Carl "Hands" Paulette, a Northeast Teamsters retiree leader and Alliance Regional Board member, had a letter published in the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review chastising Specter for "standing with big insurance companies rather than Keystone seniors." The next day, Senator Specter changed his vote.

Additionally, two of our newer representatives in Washington, DC, Christopher Carney and Jason Altmire, stood with Pennsylvania seniors against the business world despite considerable pressure.

Said Badyna:

I have written to Rep. Carney about this issue and other issues—health, Rx's, medical/dental costs, affordable housing, —not only for Pennsylvania residents and seniors but for all citizens of the USA because these issues affect all of us. We need to contact our elected officials, express our desires, needs, and opinions, and request that they support us in the way they vote on these matters.

Social Security COLA 5.8%

Following a year of rising food and energy prices, starting in January 50 million retirees and other Social Security beneficiaries will see a 5.8 percent increase in their monthly Social Security check, the largest cost-of-living adjustment since 1982.

The new COLA could mean a monthly retirement pay increase of around \$75 for the average Social Security recipient. The COLA applies to all who receive Social Security, even if they joined after the beginning of 2008.

Also in January, the maximum taxable earnings will increase from \$102,000 to \$106,800. Of the estimated 164 million workers who will pay Social Security taxes in 2009, about 11 million will have a higher tax bill as a result of the increase in the maximum taxable earnings.

Changes in WTC Law May Affect Retirees

The deadline to register for possible accidental retirement benefits for participants in rescue and recovery efforts following the World Trade Center attack on September 11, 2001, has been extended to September 11, 2010. In addition, coverage has been expanded to additional workers. Local 237 retirees who participated may be affected.

For more information, call NYCERS at 347-643-3000, go to NYCERS Client Services at 340 Jay Street in Brooklyn, write to NYCERS at 335 Adams Street, Suite 2300, Brooklyn, NY 11201-3724, or log onto www.nycers.org.

Visit Local 237's web site
www.local237.org

National Family Caregivers Month

Caregivers are family, friends, co-workers, employees, partners, and neighbors.

More than 50 million people provide care for a chronically ill, disabled or aged family member or friend during any given year.

RESOURCES

NATIONAL FAMILY CAREGIVERS ASSOCIATION
www.nfcacares.org

FAMILY CAREGIVER ALLIANCE
www.caregiver.org

Local 237 Retiree Division
212-807-0555

Retiree Personal Notes

Our thoughts are with **John Toumbacaris**, who was hospitalized recently and is now at rehab. He and his wife, Louise, celebrated their 63rd wedding anniversary September 1 . . . Rev. **Robert Forster** of Gainesville, Georgia, a former HPO and HPO chaplain, proudly reports that his son, Robert J. Forster, Jr. graduated October 14 from John Jay College and will be working for the Department of Homeless Services police as a member of Local 237. Forster's sister, who is a hospital police officer at Kings County Hospital, represented him at the graduation ceremony. His oldest daughter just returned from Iraq for the third, and last, time and is finishing out her term of service in the army as an instructor.

* * *

Walter Badyna, III of Milford, PA, attended his high school's 40th Year Class Reunion in August, with a dinner dance and a picnic the following day. "It was fun and fantastic!" Badyna said. "Got to see and talk with past classmates, talk about careers, interests, hobbies, retirement (for some of us)" . . . Condolences to retired maintenance man Israel R. Schulman of Port Lucie, Florida, on the passing of his wife of 59 years, Helen, in September . . . Condolences to retiree **Roberta Tew** and family, on the sudden passing of her husband, Lifkin June.

* * *

Retired Local 237 bookkeeper/accountant **Ruth Silber** was recently nominated for this year's Leadership Liberty Medal for her volunteer work in running the library at a Brooklyn elementary school. The *New York Post*, in partnership with *Fox 5 News*, presents the prize to an outstanding New Yorker each year. Without the 83-year-old great grandmother, P.S. 273 Principal Melissa Avery said, she would have had to close the library. Silber, who has tended the library at the East New York school five days a week from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., for 13 years, volunteers through Learning Leaders, a non-profit organization that recruits, trains, and places volunteers in public schools throughout the city. Learning Leaders is located at 80 Maiden Lane, 11th Floor, New York, NY 10038. For more information on volunteering call 212-213-3377 or send an e-mail to info@learningleaders.org.



If you would like to share a new development or special event in the Retiree Personal Notes column, call, mail, or e-mail the information to Retiree News & Views, Teamsters Local 237, 216 W. 14 St., New York, NY 10011; 212-807-0555; retirees@local237.org.

Hold the Date: Puerto Rico Retirees to Meet in December

The Retiree Division will hold its biannual conference of retirees who live in Puerto Rico on Wednesday, December 3, at the New Convention Center of Puerto Rico in San Juan. On Tuesday, retirees are invited to a fiesta with music, food, toasts, and special guests at the Rincon waterfront. A highlight of the program, on Thursday, will be an open house and reception at the Hoffa Medical Center in San Juan to inaugurate the clinic's affiliation with GHI. Retirees in Puerto Rico will receive more information and a registration form in the mail.

RETIREE NEWS & VIEWS
216 West 14 Street
New York, NY 10011

Periodicals postage
paid at New York, NY

