

Bernie Sanders
72 Killarney Drive
Burlington, VT 05201

June 8, 1991

Dear Friend,

In the mid-1950s this country led the world in wages paid to manufacturing workers. Nearly one out of four workers belonged to a labor union and bargained collectively for wages and benefits. The average family worked 40 hours a week and could afford to by a home.

What has happened since? Union membership has dropped to 16% of the workforce by 1990, and it is no accident that the decline in union membership has resulted in a decline in our overall standard of living.

In the 1980s, American workers put in more hours for less pay. Instead of 40 hours, the average family worked 84 hours a week. Instead of leading the world in wages paid, the U.S. has slipped behind many countries including Germany, Norway, and the Netherlands. Home ownership has become an unaffordable dream for more and more working families and for the first time in four decades workers face the reality that their children will have a lower standard of living than they have.

If we are going to reverse this decline in the standard of living, we must build the unions back up. Unions must organize the unorganized to raise the wages and standards in manufacturing plants. History has shown that a strong union movement means better wages and a better standard of living for everyone. Higher union wages means nonunion shops must raise their wages in order to attract employees. Higher wages mean that workers and their families are able to spend more in the stores and shops of their communities. Higher wages and a better standard of living means that workers can afford to buy their own homes and send their children to college. Everybody prospers by a strong and large union movement.

I believe that by building a strong union movement we can also build a progressive work force that will join the fight for such reforms as National Health Care, sound economic policies, a cleaner environment and a radical change in our national priorities.

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That is why I delighted to help in an important and exciting effort by the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) to achieve these goals. The UE is planning an "organizing blitz" in Vermont during June and July and has asked me to help in their efforts to recruit the volunteers they will need to be successful. We need your help.

The goal of the blitz will be to reach unorganized workers at many different plants all across Vermont. We will need volunteers to pass out UE literature inviting unorganized workers to join the union at many nonunion manufacturing plants. Volunteers would be distributing leaflets to workers at the plant gates during shift changes (mornings and/or afternoons). A leaflet distribution takes no more than two or three hours.

The blitz begins June 24 and ends July 19, and the union is hoping volunteers would be able to work once a week or once every two weeks, or whatever time you can volunteer.

Training sessions for volunteers have been set up. These sessions are as follows:

Saturday, June 22, 2 p.m.
Center Congregational Church
193 Main Street
Brattleboro, VT

and

Sunday, June 23, 10 a.m.
City Hall
Burlington VT

The sessions should last no more than two hours and will be led by the UE's Director of Organization, Ed Bruno. The lead organizer for the blitz is Kimberly Lawson. Interested volunteers should try to attend one of the above sessions. If you are interested in helping the UE, please contact Kimberly Lawson. Her phone numbers are: (802) 447-3580 or (802) 442-3826. Her address is UE, 439 Main St., Room 14, Bennington VT 05201.

Please join with me in this important effort to strengthen the union and progressive movement in Vermont. Please contact the UE today.

Sincerely,



Bernie Sanders

paid for by U.E.
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