



# CONNECTIONS

Volume VI, No. 1

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## You have a safer pension!

Open letter to all Local 853 members who are in the Western Conference of Teamsters or the Automotive Industries pension trust funds  
— From Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise —

June, 2005

United Airlines last month joined Enron, WorldCom and Arthur Anderson in the corporate hall of shame. After years of forcing its employees into give-backs on wages and benefits, United has finally used the bankruptcy process to stop making payments to its retirees and shirk its obligations to existing employees. A federal agency, the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation, will underwrite these workers' pensions at taxpayer expense. But it will only provide a fraction of what the retirees are presently getting, and a fraction of what the workers who are currently working, expected to get when they retire.

What United did and what the court approved is inexcusable! And it's scary, too.

I am writing to assure you that your pension, whether it is the Western Conference of Teamsters (WCT) Pension Plan or the Automotive Industry (AI) Pension Plan, is safe—even if your company declares bankruptcy, or any other company participating in the plan goes belly-up.

If you are covered by either the WCT or AI Pension Trust Funds, you are participating in a very different form of pension plan from the United plan. While all three plans are "defined benefit plans," yours is a "Multi-employer plan." The United plan is a "Single-employer plan."

A Single-Employer plan is dependent on the contributions from a single employer. If the company that supports the plan goes out of business or files for bankruptcy, the plan is in jeopardy.

Our Multi-Employer plans receive contributions from hundreds, and in the case of the WCT Plan thousands, of employers. These funds are co-mingled so that if one single company goes out of business, the other employers take up the slack.

As many of you know, many companies, especially in the freight industry, have gone out of business, but the pensions of the Teamster members who worked at these companies have not been affected. This is the benefit of a multi-employer plan. It affords much more protection than any other type of pension vehicle.

There's a larger point to this. The attack on retirement security—whether it's United dumping its pensioners, George Bush seeking to privatize Social Security, or Arnold Schwarzenegger going after the pensions of cops, teachers and firemen—are all pieces of the same puzzle. These guys want pensions, Social Security and Medicare to go away. They want to roll back the safety net that lawmakers in both parties agreed long ago would provide a min-

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## You have a safer pension *(cont. from page 1)*

imal level of support during times of disability and retirement. It's happening all over the country.

Your pension plan was built to last, whether you've worked at a Local 853 shop for 10 months or 25 years. But think beyond your own retirement. Think about your kids, and their kids. If Bush, Schwarzenegger and their kind are allowed to continue their attacks on our fundamental rights, and our basic benefits, eventually no one will be safe.

That's why its so important for all of us

to do the little things—register to vote, vote intelligently, and support those political leaders who will support our rights to good jobs with decent wages, benefits and retirement security. In the near future, I will ask you to send letters to your Representatives and Senators to support federal legislation that will help strengthen our multi-employer plans.

And as we remind you elsewhere in this newsletter, your voice is that much louder and stronger if you join with millions of other Teamsters by contributing to DRIVE,

the political action fund that supports politicians who support you. Because when it gets down to it, its all about who's got power and who's got the political strength to protect your interests.

Fraternally,

Rome A. Aloise, Secretary-Treasurer

## DRIVE: Democrat, Republican, Independent Voter Education

Big Business spends big money in Washington to influence members of Congress and push their anti-worker plans. Corporations outspend working families on politics by more than 15-1.

Teamsters have stopped some of the worst attacks on working people through grassroots political action and aggressive lobbying on Capitol Hill and in State Houses and City Halls across America. But, now we have to fight back harder than ever. And we have to move forward with our own programs: improving job safety, fighting for affordable childcare, and stopping abuses by corporate health providers and insurance companies.

You can take a stand for working families by contributing to DRIVE—the Teamsters' political action committee. Your contribution will support grassroots action by Teamster families to stand up to Big Business. Your membership in DRIVE will also help elect political candidates who care about working people.

Get a DRIVE card from your steward or your on-sight political coordinator, fill it out and give it back. DRIVE costs just one dollar per week, taken directly out of your paycheck—you won't even feel the big difference you can make.

**Contribute to DRIVE—your future depends on it!**



## Teamsters Local 853

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**Members:** Send address changes and comments to the above address or e-mail us: [connections@teamsters853.org](mailto:connections@teamsters853.org)

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## Benefits & Announcements

### WCT Pension Plan Q&A

On the second Wednesday of every month, a representative from the Western Conference of Teamsters Pension Administrator comes to Local 853's San Leandro office to answer your pension questions. Call 510-895-8853 or 800-400-1250 for an appointment.

### SIP 401(k) Enrollment

Most Local 853 members are eligible for the SIP 401(k) Plan. If you are not yet enrolled, or wish to increase your pre-tax

deferred amounts—check with your business agent, your company's HR department, or call 1-800-4-PRETAX [1-800-477-3829].

### Monthly Meetings

Local 853's membership meetings are held the Second Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. They are held in the West Bay and East Bay:

- 1700 Marina Blvd., San Leandro, or
  - Laborers' Union Hall, 300-7th Avenue San Mateo
- Call 510-895-8853 to confirm location.

# What has Arnold Schwarzenegger done for you lately?

Many union members joined the large majority of Californians who voted Arnold Schwarzenegger into office in the historic 2003 Recall campaign. Perhaps you were one of the millions who did. After all, Gray Davis was a relentless fundraiser. He had no personality or pizzazz. And to balance the state budget, he was reinstating the Vehicle License Fee, which had been suspended when the budget was flush.

During his first year in office, Governor Schwarzenegger enjoyed high approval ratings and was successful in passing a number of propositions.

But his star has started to falter. The Governor lost ground when he attacked nurses and teachers, whom he refers to as "special interests," and when he had to retract a bad pension reform bill because it privatized pensions and denied payments to spouses and children of firefighters and police killed on the job. In addition, the fact has come to light that Schwarzenegger has raised more money in one year from out-of-state contributors than Gray Davis raised in his entire five years in office.

Rather than try to negotiate with the state legislature—which is his job—the Governor has some propositions that he'd like you to vote on in a special election in November, 2005. With the state budget still running a multi-billion dollar deficit, he thinks the counties should pony up another \$70-\$80 million for an off-year election.

Is this election necessary or is it a political vendetta against public employees and unionized workers? You decide.

"Arnold Schwarzenegger announced he is going to ask President Bush for help with the budget. What better way to deal with a \$38 billion deficit than get advice from a guy that created a \$450 billion deficit." — Jay Leno

## The value of an \$80 million special election

The Governor must decide by June 13 (after this newsletter goes to press), whether he wants to have a special election on November 8, 2005, or to hold his initiatives until the already-scheduled election in June 2006. The Special Election is estimated to cost about \$80 million.

Here are some examples of what \$80 million could be better spent on:

- \$80 million pays for the salaries of more than 2,300 teachers.
- \$80 million pays for almost 4 million up-to-date textbooks for our students.
- \$80 million implements class size reduction in nearly 6,000 classrooms.
- \$80 million pays for almost 1,200 shiny new school buses.
- \$80 million could pay for college for almost 10,000 UC students and almost 12,000 Cal State students.
- \$80 million pays for more than 4,000 caregivers so that 5,000 seniors and persons with disabilities can receive quality homecare.
- \$80 million pays for a year of health insurance for approximately 29,900 uninsured Californians between the ages of 30-49 – taking care of the largest group of uninsured in our state.

## The governor's proposed anti-working family initiatives

### Paycheck deception for public sector unions

This initiative would prohibit a union that represents any public employees from using union dues or fees for political contributions unless each member provides written consent on a form mandated by the initiative. Also known as the "son of Prop 226," the effect of this initiative is to make it more difficult for working people to have a voice in the political process.

### Reapportionment

Borrowing a page from the Texas handbook, Gov. Schwarzenegger wants to require a three-member panel of retired judges to immediately redraw congressional and state legislative district lines. The Governor has stated that the purpose of this maneuver is to elect more moderates to the Legislature and congress. The real goal is to boot the pro-worker majority out of legislative power in Sacramento.

### Elimination of seniority in public schools

This initiative would prohibit a school district from designating a teacher as a permanent employee until he or she has worked five consecutive school years. Not only would this affect job stability, but it would alter when teachers are eligible for health and retirement benefits. The initiative would also allow a school district to terminate a permanent employee based on two negative job evaluations.

### Elimination of school funding commitment

This Initiative allows the Governor to make devastating mid-year budget cuts if revenues fall below expenditures. It would gut Proposition 98, the law voters approved to guarantee minimum funding to our schools. It eliminates the requirement that the state must restore any money owed to schools when education funding falls below the minimum guarantee.



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## *Local 853 – organizing and building a stronger union*

### **TeamMSters do it again—breaking last year’s MS fundraising record**

“Each year gets better and better,” says Local 853 Office Manager and TeamMSters MS Walk Coordinator Janine Vanier. “We’ve already collected more than \$85,000, breaking last year’s amazing record of \$66,000. I’m so proud of this Local and our entire union’s participation.”

In its fifth team effort in the annual Multiple Sclerosis Walk, the TeamMSters

had another great day out at Crown Beach in Alameda on April 10, as they raised more money than ever before.

MS is an auto-immune disease that affects the central nervous system. Approximately 400,000 people in the U.S. acknowledge having MS and every week about 200 more are diagnosed.

Janine learned she had MS in 1987.

“Getting involved in the National MS Society made me realize I’m not alone,” she explains. She started fundraising at work, telling people that she “knew a person with MS.” Soon, she became comfortable enough to admit that person was herself.

Janine wishes to thank the 2005 walkers and all who contributed money, time and inspiration to make this event a success.

The 2005 TeamMSters

