

**Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employes Division
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NEWS CLIPS

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Union membership up in state

Union workers 6.4 percent of wage, salary workers in Oklahoma

By D.E. Smoot
Phoenix Staff Writer

— Union membership in Oklahoma ticked up slightly in 2011 despite efforts by lawmakers to undermine organized labor.

Bureau of Labor Statistics, a division of the U.S. Department of Labor, reported 94,000 union members accounted for 6.4 percent of the state's wage and salary workers. That compares with 77,000 wage and salary workers, or 5.5 percent, who claimed union membership in 2010.

BLS statistics, gleaned from the Current Population Survey data, show 113,000 wage and salary workers, or 7.7 percent, were represented by unions or covered by an employee association in 2011 even though they had no union affiliation. That was up from 99,000, or 6.9 percent, from the year before.

Nationally, union membership remained relatively flat. BLS numbers show union members accounted for 11.8 percent of employed wage and salary workers in 2011, down slightly from 11.9 percent in 2010.

Regional Commissioner Stanley W. Suchman said union membership in Oklahoma hit its peak in 1990, when it averaged 10.6 percent. It reached its lowest point at 5.4 percent in 2005, four years after Oklahomans passed right-to-work laws. Membership ticked upward in 2006 and 2007 but lost those gains the next two years before making new gains.

Suchman stated in the BLS report released in March that union membership in Oklahoma never has exceeded the national average.

Dustin Williams, a Muskogee Parks Department employee helping other non-uniform employees win back their collective bargaining rights, said labor supporters have rallied as efforts to erode union support has intensified.

“Around the U.S., a lot of unions have come out in full force,” Williams said, noting the struggle that has ensued after the Oklahoma Legislature repealed a law mandating collective bargaining for non-uniform employees in cities of a certain size. “Membership leads to better wages, better benefits and better working conditions.”

The BLS report bears that out. Among full-time wage and salary workers, union members in 2011 reported “median usual weekly earnings” of \$938 while non-union members earned \$729. The BLS report noted the differentiation could vary due to occupation, industry, firm size or geographic regions.

MONDAY JUN 18, 2012 7:42 AM

Teamsters Punish Lockout With Rolling Sympathy Strikes

BY [JOSH EIDELSON](#)

Over the past month, Teamsters in five cities refused work in solidarity with locked-out sanitation workers in Evansville, Indiana. The Evansville labor dispute is the second in three months to feature sympathy strikes against Republic Services. This rare tactic represents a major escalation in the Teamsters' struggle with the company, and it's poised to intensify this week.

As I [reported](#) for Working In These Times, Republic Services/ Allied Waste, the second-largest solid waste company in the United States, locked 79 workers out of their jobs six weeks ago. (Under U.S. labor law, when union contracts expire, companies can lock workers out, and either shut down production or bring in replacement workers to do their jobs.) Republic told workers they'd be locked out unless they accepted a "last, best and final" offer that would eliminate their pensions and replace them with 401(k)s.

Teamsters Local 215 refused the offer, and Republic followed through on the threat. While Republic is only locking workers out in Evansville, the union says the company is proposing to get out of the pension fund in several cities where contracts have expired.

On May 24, locked-out Republic workers traveled to Urbana, Illinois, and started picketing a local Republic facility. In solidarity, members of Teamsters Local 26 refused to work. On May 30, Republic workers in Wayne, Michigan did the same, as did their counterparts in Richmond, California on June 1. Three days later, members of three Teamsters locals in Milpitas, California – some employed by Republic, some hired by other companies to make deliveries to Republic – followed suit. So did members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the Ironworkers union hired to build a recycling facility there. On June 8, another 300 Teamsters in Long Beach, California did their own one-day sympathy strike.

A Teamsters source who requested anonymity said he expected the conflict to expand further this week, including "escalations with workers who have expired contracts and a strong possibility of those pickets being extended to other locations."

Maurice Thomas, a Republic diesel mechanic and Teamsters shop steward, says 90% of his co-workers in Long Beach participated in the one-day work stoppage. Despite favorable contract language, Thomas says it wasn't easy: Management "did everything they could to prevent us from doing it."

According to Thomas, Republic posted a notice saying that anyone who missed work on Friday would be required to work on Saturday – normally a day off - instead. When workers struck on Friday and didn't come to work on Saturday, Republic said they would be disciplined. But Thomas says that the number of workers involved, the contract language, and the pushback from rank-and-file leaders on the property forced management to back down.

Thomas says he welcomed the chance to support co-workers in Evansville because "ultimately, the management is going to back each other up from city to city. We have to be one union, one

contrat. If we stick to that, we can have just as much power as corporate America.” Thomas was also glad to send a message to local management, whom he accused of forcing drivers to work unsafe levels of overtime.

Chuck Whobrey, the president of Local 215, says that for the 79 workers in Evansville, facing “the monster of a company, it can be a pretty lonely feeling. And so whenever they’ve extended the picket lines, it has really had a huge impact” on workers to see support from “people they don’t even know. Anytime you can get through to people that they’re in something bigger than themselves, it really does inspire them.”

As for management, Whobrey says, “I wouldn’t say they’re more dug in, but I think that they’re following whatever plan of action they had from Day 1 of negotiations.”

The Teamsters have also reached out to Republic’s shareholders, contrasting the cost of pension payments with a promised death benefit for Republic’s CEO, which they say is worth \$23 million. Last month the union protested outside a shareholder meeting and introduced a shareholder resolution that would have given shareholders a vote on death benefits; it failed with 41% of the vote.

Republic did not respond to a request for comment, but in interviews last month, local general manager Mark McKune described the lockout as a [response](#) to “threats of war” from the union, and the proposal to replace pensions as [motivated](#) by concerns over the pension fund’s solvency.

The Sympathy Strike Strategy

Before the National Labor Relations Act established legal collective bargaining rights within discrete bargaining units, and the Taft-Hartley Amendments banned many solidarity actions, strikes would commonly spread from one group of workers to other worksites in the industry, or to other workers in the supply chain. Today, such solidarity strikes are rare.

The Teamsters’ ability to pull them off rests in part on a “conscience clause” in some of their contracts, which specifies that workers can’t be required to work if it means crossing a picket line. (Other workers who had expired contracts have participated in solidarity strikes this year, and thus weren’t prohibited from striking.) Wherever other Teamsters – even a single one – set up a picket line, workers with a conscience clause have the right the forfeit pay and refuse work.

In March, union officials in Mobile, Alabama, credited such solidarity strikes with a big role in the contract they won at Republic. As I [reported](#) for Alternet, workers in Mobile struck for eight days after alleging that Republic was attempting to back out of already agreed-upon provisions in tentative contract agreements. During that strike, workers in three other cities refused work for days at a time.

“I think it’s awesome,” Mobile striker Michael McLean said during the strike. “It shows that the brotherhood is strong, wherever you’re at.”

Reviving the Strike author and *In These Times* contributor Joe Burns observed at the time that “The Teamsters are relatively rare within the labor movement” because their contracts protect “the ability to honor picket lines.” Burns, a negotiator for the Association of Flight Attendants, said that while there are “plenty of examples within the Teamsters of conservative trade union

officials choosing not to honor picket lines,” overall the Teamsters “still have that culture of solidarity within their union that’s been lost by a lot of unions” barred from such actions.

But there are limits to the tactic. While Mobile workers told me during their strike that they’d welcome the chance to show reciprocal solidarity, their contract has no conscience clause, and so they’d be bound by the “No strike” clause of their current contract even if Evansville workers showed up to picket.

“We’ve brought it up,” in negotiations, says Levon “Rooster” Lindsey, a business representative for Mobile-based Teamsters Local 991. “The company’s never even offered to accept that language. But it’s something, looking forward, that we’re looking to get.” Lindsey was interviewed while in Evansville, where he was meeting with locked-out workers to share stories from the Mobile victory.

Barred from striking, workers in Mobile and elsewhere have taken less disruptive acts of solidarity, including wearing stickers that say “Stop Trashing Our Contract.” Lindsey says Mobile workers may do informational pickets at the Mobile facility, in which union members show up early before their shift and demonstrate outside the plant during non-work time.

“The core of the Teamsters is a pension plan,” says Lindsey. “We must fight and we must win.”

Whobrey says that representatives from several Teamsters locals that deal with Republic met on Wednesday to discuss further steps to press the company to end the lockout. Thomas says he’s talked to workers in Gardena, California, who are “waiting their turn” to mount a work stoppage as well. Meanwhile, Thomas says, co-workers have told him they were energized by the one-day strike: “They said that we should do it once a month.”

We Don’t Need No Education

By PAUL KRUGMAN

Hope springs eternal. For a few hours I was ready to applaud Mitt Romney for speaking honestly about what his calls for smaller government actually mean.

Never mind. Soon the candidate was being his normal self, denying having said what he said and serving up a bunch of self-contradictory excuses. But let’s talk about his accidental truth-telling, and what it reveals.

In the remarks Mr. Romney later tried to deny, he derided President Obama: “He says we need more firemen, more policemen, more teachers.” Then he declared, “It’s time for us to cut back on government and help the American people.”

You can see why I was ready to give points for honesty. For once, he actually admitted what he and his allies mean when they talk about shrinking government. Conservatives love to pretend that there are vast armies of government bureaucrats doing who knows what; in reality, a majority of government workers are employed providing either education (teachers) or public protection (police officers and firefighters).

So would getting rid of teachers, police officers, and firefighters help the American people? Well, some Republicans would prefer to see Americans get less education; remember Rick Santorum's description of colleges as "indoctrination mills"? Still, neither less education nor worse protection are issues the G.O.P. wants to run on.

But the more relevant question for the moment is whether the public job cuts Mr. Romney applauds are good or bad for the economy. And we now have a lot of evidence bearing on that question.

First of all, there's our own experience. Conservatives would have you believe that our disappointing economic performance has somehow been caused by excessive government spending, which crowds out private job creation. But the reality is that private-sector job growth has more or less matched the recoveries from the last two recessions; the big difference this time is an unprecedented fall in public employment, which is now about 1.4 million jobs less than it would be if it had grown as fast as it did under President George W. Bush.

And, if we had those extra jobs, the unemployment rate would be much lower than it is — something like 7.3 percent instead of 8.2 percent. It sure looks as if cutting government when the economy is deeply depressed hurts rather than helps the American people.

The really decisive evidence on government cuts, however, comes from Europe. Consider the case of Ireland, which has reduced public employment by 28,000 since 2008 — the equivalent, as a share of population, of laying off 1.9 million workers here. These cuts were hailed by conservatives, who predicted great results. "The Irish economy is showing encouraging signs of recovery," declared Alan Reynolds of the Cato Institute in June 2010.

But recovery never came; Irish unemployment is currently more than 14 percent. Ireland's experience shows that austerity in the face of a depressed economy is a terrible mistake to be avoided if possible.

And the point is that in America it is possible. You can argue that countries like Ireland had and have very limited policy choices. But America — which unlike Europe has a federal government — has an easy way to reverse the job cuts that are killing the recovery: have the feds, who can borrow at historically low rates, provide aid that helps state and local governments weather the hard times. That, in essence, is what the president was proposing and Mr. Romney was deriding.

So the former governor of Massachusetts was telling the truth the first time: by opposing aid to beleaguered state and local governments, he is, in effect, calling for more layoffs of teachers, policemen and firemen.

Actually, it's kind of ironic. While Republicans love to engage in Europe-bashing, they're actually the ones who want us to emulate European-style austerity and experience a European-style depression.

And that's not just an inference. Last week R. Glenn Hubbard of Columbia University, a top Romney adviser, published an article in a German newspaper urging the Germans to ignore advice from Mr. Obama and continue pushing their hard-line policies. In so doing, Mr. Hubbard was deliberately undercutting a sitting president's foreign policy. More important, however, he was throwing his support behind a policy that is collapsing as you read this.

In fact, almost everyone following the situation now realizes that Germany's austerity obsession has brought Europe to the edge of catastrophe — almost everyone, that is, except the Germans themselves and, it turns out, the Romney economic team.

Needless to say, this bodes ill if Mr. Romney wins in November. For all indications are that his idea of smart policy is to double down on the very spending cuts that have hobbled recovery here and sent Europe into an economic and political tailspin.

Paradise Lost: The Sinking Middle Class

By Thomas Magstadt

Deep down we know there's no paradise on earth, but as the children of immigrants who came to this country believing it was a land of milk and honey, we are stalwart. For generations now, it's the middle class that has sustained the dream of "America, the Beautiful" — with a dash of liberty and justice for all. But now the very foundations on which that dream has rested are crumbling. Consider the facts in this recent editorial in the *New York Times*:

[The] numbers on the loss of personal wealth [since 2007-2008] are staggering and say a lot about why the economic recovery has been so sluggish — and why the government will need to do a lot more to turn things around.

According to a new survey from the Federal Reserve, the median American family's net worth dropped by nearly 40 percent from 2007 to 2010 — from \$126,400 to \$77,300 — wiping out 18 years' worth of accumulated wealth. The crash in house prices accounted for most of that loss. Median family income, which was already edging down in the years before the recession, continued to decline, dropping from \$49,600 in 2007 to \$45,800 in 2010, about where it was in the mid-1990s.

The middle class was hit the hardest...

The recession "would have been much deeper and the weak recovery much weaker", we are told, but for past government support (for example, payroll tax cuts and extended jobless benefits). Of course, Republicans in Congress opposed these measures. Give the socialist Obama an inch, you see, and he will turn this country into a Marxist dictatorship.

The *Times* editorial calls for "...more support, including federal spending on education and public-works projects to create jobs, targeted tax credits for hiring, programs to deliver mortgage relief that supports house prices...as well as a renewed commitment to financial regulation to ensure that the system doesn't melt down again." However, "The Republicans — for reasons of ideology and self-serving election-year politics — are determined to block all of these necessary programs."

In case you haven't heard: Freedom isn't free. Just ask the rich Republicans who seem to think it's fair that millionaires and billionaires get big tax breaks not available to middle class working families. After all, "earned income" is for losers; winners have "capital gains" to keep them warm.

And so what if losers pay a higher rate of tax than winners. Somebody has to pay for all that freedom they...uh, I mean we...enjoy.

There are no two ways about it. When the middle class is in decline, the storied "American way of life" is imperiled. Neither a republic worthy of the name nor a robust market economy can exist without a strong and vibrant middle class. That's not bleeding heart schmalz; it's a fact that only block-headed fools dare to dispute.

In its latest report, the Federal Reserve published a bleak analysis showing – guess what? – the the impact of the Great Recession hit the middle class the hardest. The 60 percent of American families in the middle of the middle had a larger decline in wealth and income on a percentage basis than the very wealthy or the very poor.

The reasons are fairly obvious. The most important asset for the average middle-class household is, well, the house it's holding (or trying to hold onto), an asset which is worth a frightful fraction of what the owners paid for it in the bank-driven Bubble Era before the Big Meltdown in 2008. The median value of home equity plunged from \$110,000 in 2007 to \$75,000 in 2010. While the stock market has staged a comeback of sorts, housing prices have barely budged.

Meanwhile, median family income has plummeted. The crash of housing prices accounts for three-quarters of the loss, but it's also clear from this mass of data that the crisis of the middle class cannot be explained in terms of a single cause or fixed with bobby pins and band-aids.

The rot has eaten deeply into the political system as well. We will see the effects of this decay on display in the 2012 election. Casino tycoon and multibillionaire Sheldon Adelson says the money he's prepared to pour into Mitt Romney's bid for the presidency is "limitless". Here's the scenario Steve Bertoni writing in Forbes magazine lays out:

Thanks to the Citizens United decision, there are no curbs on how much Adelson could give the pro-Romney Super PAC, Restoring Our Future. Given that he's one of the 15 richest people in the world, the Sands chairman could personally bankroll the equivalent of entire presidential campaign—say, \$1 billion or so—and not even notice. (The \$10 million donation he just made to Romney is equivalent to \$40 for an American family with a net worth of \$100,000.)

What we are experiencing in this country is an unsustainable state: the rich get everything they want, and they want everything. It's as though the plutocrats have a death wish. Tragically, they alone are in a position to move the machinery of government toward necessary reforms, but they persist in doing the opposite. If the inequality and injustice of the New Derivative Economy does not provoke a popular uprising, the combination of fundamental structural imbalances and corrupt politics will eventually bring the whole degenerate system crashing down.

No mass consumption society can prosper if its middle-class citizens lack the means to consume and the confidence to invest. And no republic can flourish or long survive when the people's elected representatives get in bed with billionaires and bankers, rig elections, sell votes, polarize society for personal gain, and place partisan interests above the public interest.

GOP Senate Candidate Wants the Media to Stop Covering ‘Sob Stories’ About Low-Income Americans

By Angela Guo

June 19, 2012

At a recent [Republican Wisconsin U.S. Senate candidate Eric Hovde said that he is exasperated with media coverage of “sad personal stories” about Americans who have been affected by the Great Recession. Evidently tired of reading about low-income or homeless individuals unable to access basic needs, Hovde expressed](#) his disdain for such “sob stories,” while pointing to a reporter:

I see a reporter here. I just pray that you start writing about these issues. I just pray. Stop always writing about, ‘Oh, the person couldn’t get, you know, their food stamps or this or that.’ You know, I saw something the other day — it’s like, another sob story, and I’m like, ‘But what about what’s happening to the country and the country as a whole?’ That’s going to devastate everybody.

According to Hovde, more important issues include lowering the corporate tax rate and the national deficit. Hovde’s comments come after a May 2011 [study](#) conducted by the *National Journal*, which reviewed how often the words “unemployment” or “deficit” appeared in the nation’s five largest newspapers. The findings clearly show that the deficit was covered significantly more than the unemployment in major American news outlets.

A Wisconsin hedge fund manager and businessman, Eric Hovde is one of four candidates looking for the GOP nomination for the state’s U.S. Senate seat. The winner would run against Democratic candidate Rep. Tammy Baldwin. But perhaps Hovde simply doesn’t want the media to write about food stamps because then people might notice that [Republicans are trying to cut them](#).

6/19/2012 10:30:00 AM

New website addresses rail worker fatigue

The [Federal Railroad Administration \(FRA\)](#), rail labor unions and educational institutions have teamed up to create a website, titled “Railroaders’ Guide to Healthy Sleep,” aimed at helping railroaders combat fatigue.

Located at www.railroaderssleep.org, the site offers insight and information on railroad worker fatigue management, sleep and sleep disorders, and advises railroaders how to obtain better sleep so they can improve their quality of life and job performance. It also features videos and other tools to help railroaders stay safe on the job, as well as an interactive feature enabling workers to test their reaction time.

The website’s creation stemmed from a project that began in 2010 by the [Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen \(BLET\)](#), [United Transportation Union](#), Harvard Medical School and the WGBH Educational Foundation. Data was compiled through anonymous survey

results from numerous BLET and UTU members.

The website is sponsored by the FRA and produced in partnership with the WGBH Educational Foundation and John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center.

6/19/2012 11:00:00 AM

U.S. Chamber calls on Congress to pass transportation bill

Yesterday, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce sent a letter to House and Senate Transportation Conference Committee members calling on them to resolve their differences over surface transportation legislation and pass a report out of the committee prior to the expiration of current surface transportation legislation on June 30.

“Congress must build on the strong bicameral and bipartisan support for transportation reform and investment and enact thoughtful policies that will increase public trust and confidence in federal highway, transit and safety programs; help stabilize critical industries; and strengthen America’s competitive edge,” the letter states.

The letter notes that, while there are differences between House Republicans’ transportation legislation and the Senate Democrats’ two-year transportation bill passed earlier this year, there also are many common elements in major policy categories.

Among those common elements: consolidating and focusing programs; increasing state flexibility on transportation legislation; requiring accountability for transportation projects; accelerating project delivery by reducing federal bureaucracy; improving freight movement of goods throughout the United States by reducing traffic congestion and bottlenecks; improving highway safety; improving transit; enhancing research and technology; and expanding public-private partnerships and private participation.

The conference committee has been meeting since May 8. An extension of SAFETEA-LU, the current law that funds surface transportation programs, will expire on June 30. Congress has extended SAFETEA-LU nine times since it expired in 2009.

Romney mum on labor unions as he works for Michigan votes

DEWITT, Mich. – [Mitt Romney](#) wrapped up his five-day tour of six swing states Tuesday in a state with a heavy union presence but far away from any union power centers and largely silent on the groups that could be a key foe here and in other [Rust Belt](#) states in November.

Through photo ops and roundtables, Romney for the most part avoided using the tough rhetoric about unions that was common during the Republican presidential primaries. And the bus tour steered clear of union-heavy industrial towns, as Romney seeks to gather votes in the more Republican rural areas.

"He won't come anywhere near Detroit," predicted Lance Adams, 40, an employee resources coordinator from [Chesterfield Township](#) who attended an event sponsored by the [Democratic National Committee](#) to counter Romney's bus tour.

- A small band of pro-labor protesters followed Romney here and in several other states — at times causing enough ruckus that the candidate, or his wife, Ann, responded to their taunts.

In Michigan, Romney will have more to contend with than protesters and negative ads: The Michigan secretary of State is reviewing a petition to force a November vote on making collective-bargaining rights part of the state's constitution.

Karla Swift, president of the Michigan AFL-CIO, said ballot initiatives as well as state races will help drive turnout in a presidential year that already attracts more voters to the polls.

She noted that the stops on the Romney tour here were nowhere near neighborhoods with union households.

"Clearly, he's dodging," Swift said.

Romney had little to say about unions during his bus tour, but during the Republican primaries, he on several occasions blasted [President Obama](#) for putting "union stooges" on the [National Labor Relations Board](#) as payback for the help that organized labor provided for his 2008 election.

Union members who attended a news conference Monday in Detroit said Romney's contempt for unions was particularly galling because of his roots in the [Motor City](#).

"It's a slap in the face, how he got up and said, 'Let Detroit go bankrupt,' " said Mark Dickow, 49, president of the United Autoworkers Local 140 in Warren, referring to Romney's 2008 *New York Times* op-ed piece with the headline "Let Detroit go bankrupt."

"He'll never win in this state," said Nick Stefani, 48, a union benefit representative from [Shelby Township](#). "This is a Democratic state for that reason alone; he's just forgotten where he's come from."

Some Romney supporters agreed that it would be a tough climb for Romney, particularly because of the voting power coming from the Detroit area.

"I think he can; I just don't think he will," said Tammy Baumgardner, 54, a screen printer in DeWitt who attended Romney's rally on Tuesday.

Romney attempted to rebut comments such as those during his stump speeches across the state, emphasizing his Michigan roots as well as the accomplishments of Michigan Republicans such as Gov. [Rick Snyder](#).

"Most people say Michigan is out of reach for a Republican — no way a Republican could win," he said to the crowd in DeWitt who braved temperatures over 90 degrees to hear him speak. "But you know ... I see Republicans having been elected in this state. And regardless of whether or not you are a Democrat or a Republican, the people of Michigan want somebody to get the job done."

Tim Daoust, 63, a small-business owner in Frankenmuth, said unions have been weakened over the past few years and predicted a Romney win.

"I really think that (Obama's) performance at this point anyway will hurt him," he said. "For that reason, I think (Romney has) got a chance."

Romney's bus tour stopped in [New Hampshire](#), Pennsylvania, Ohio, Iowa, Wisconsin and Michigan, all states considered competitive for the November general election.

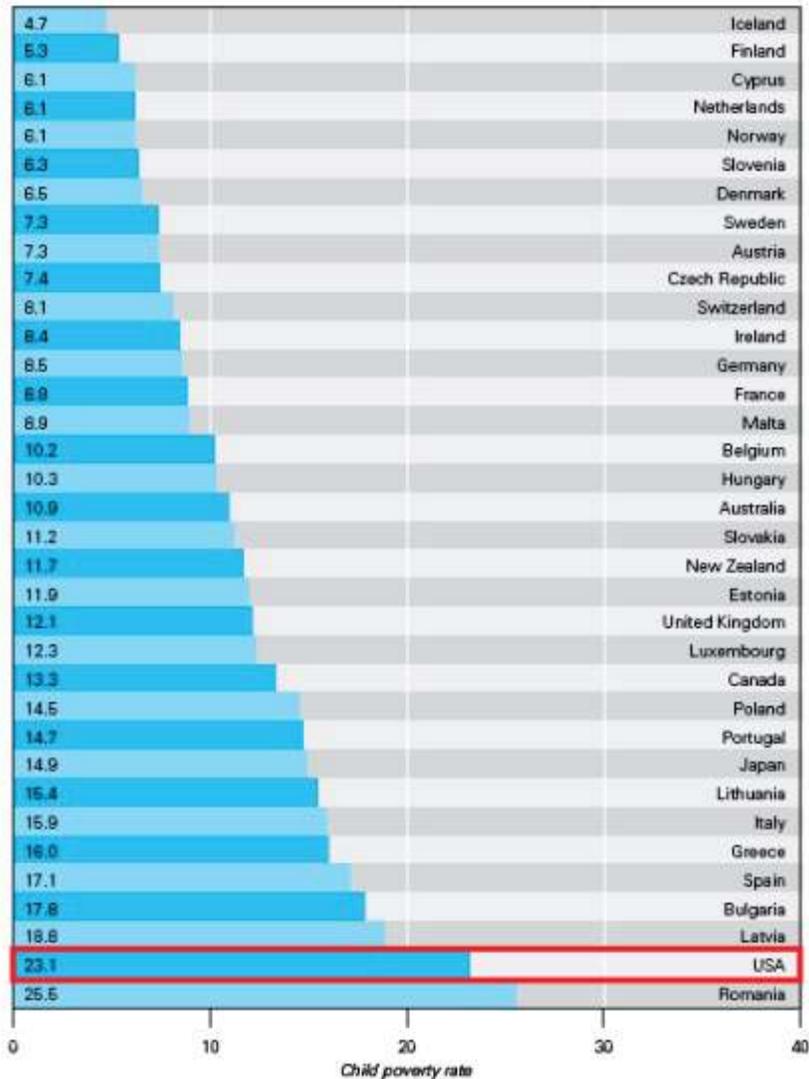
Tens of Millions of Children Living in Poverty in the World's Richest Countries

Unicef/News Report

June 20, 2012

As debates rage on austerity measures and social spending cuts, a new report reveals the extent of child poverty and child deprivation in the world's advanced economies. Some 13 million children in the European Union (plus Norway and Iceland) lack basic items necessary for their development. Meanwhile, 30 million children – across 35 countries with developed economies – live in poverty.

Report Card 10, from UNICEF's Office of Research, looks at child poverty and child deprivation across the industrialized world, comparing and ranking countries' performance. This international comparison, says the Report, proves that child poverty in these countries is not inevitable, but policy susceptible - and that some countries are doing much better than others at protecting their most vulnerable children.



“The data reinforces that far too many children continue to go without the basics in countries that have the means to provide,” said Gordon Alexander, Director of UNICEF’s Office of Research. “The report also shows that some countries performed well – when looking at what is largely pre crisis data – due to the social protection systems that were in place. The risk is that in the current crisis we won’t see the consequences of poor decisions until much later.”

Report Card 10 examines child poverty and child deprivation in two entirely different ways. By examining these two different types of child poverty, *Report Card 10* brings together the very latest available data on child poverty and child deprivation across all of the world’s advanced industrial economies.

The first measure is a Child Deprivation Index, taken from data European Union’s Statistics on Income and Living Conditions from 29 European countries that includes for the first time a section on children. *Report Card 10* defines a child as “deprived” if he or she lacks two or more of a list of 14 basic items, such as three meals a day, a quiet place to do homework, educational books at home, or an Internet connection. The highest rates of deprivation are found in countries that include Romania, Bulgaria and Portugal (with more than 70%, 50% and 27% respectively), though even some richer countries, such as

France and Italy, have deprivation rates above 10%. The Nordic countries have the least deprivation among children, all with rates below 3%.

The second measure scrutinized in *Report Card 10* looks at relative poverty, examining the percentage of children living below their national “poverty line” – defined as 50 per cent of median disposable household income.

In doing so UNICEF’s Office of Research tries to estimate what percentage of children are falling significantly behind what can be considered normal for their own societies.

The Nordic countries and the Netherlands have the lowest rates of relative child poverty, at around seven per cent. Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom have rates of between 10 and 15 per cent, while more than 20 per cent of children in Romania and the United States live in relative poverty.

Particularly striking in *Report Card 10* are the comparisons between countries with similar economies, demonstrating that government policy can have a significant impact on the lives of children. For example, Denmark and Sweden have much lower rates of child deprivation than Belgium or Germany, yet all four countries have roughly similar levels of economic development and per capita income.

“The report makes clear that some governments are doing much better at tackling child deprivation than others,” said Mr Alexander. “The best performers show it is possible to address poverty within the current fiscal space. On the flip side, failure to protect children from today’s economic crisis is one of the most costly mistakes a society can make.”

6/20/2012 10:00:00 AM

BNSF outlines maintenance work in Colorado, Wyoming

[BNSF Railway Co.](#) continues to invest in capital projects throughout the western United States.

In Colorado, the Class I will spend \$80 million this year for maintenance, and capacity improvement and expansion work. BNSF plans to build a new maintenance-of-way facility, upgrade signals for positive train control (PTC), surface and undercut 325 miles of track, and replace 50 miles of rail and 211,000 ties.

In Wyoming, the Class I plans to spend \$60 million on various projects, such as surfacing and undercutting 1,115 miles of track, and replacing 31 miles of rail and 36,000 ties.

The projects are part of BNSF’s 2012 capital program, which calls for spending \$2.1 billion on its core network and related assets, and \$1.1 billion on locomotive, freight car and other equipment acquisitions. The spending plan also includes about \$300 million for PTC and \$400 million for terminal, line and intermodal expansion and efficiency projects.

6/20/2012 11:00:00 AM

Sen. Boxer releases statement on Conference Committee's work

Yesterday, Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, released a statement following a meeting called by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) and House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio).

Boxer's statement was related to the work of the House and Senate Transportation Conference Committee, which she chairs and which has been meeting for more than a month to negotiate a compromise on a long-term surface transportation reauthorization bill. The current legislation, which is an extension to the SAFETEA-LU law, will expire June 30.

"Senate Leader Harry Reid and Speaker John Boehner have told [Transportation and Infrastructure Committee] Chairman John Mica and me to finish our work this week on the transportation bill," Boxer said in her prepared statement. "I have asked Chairman Mica to meet continually over the next several days to achieve this deadline."

6/21/2012 10:00:00 AM

Politicians, railroads tout impending TIGER IV grants

The [U.S. Department of Transportation](#) soon will announce the recipients of [Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery](#) (TIGER) IV program grants, for which the federal government has set aside a total of \$500 million. In the meantime, several railroads and politicians have issued press releases touting successful grant applications.

- U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn announced the [Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency \(CREATE\)](#) program will be awarded a \$10.4 million TIGER IV grant to help complete a \$370 million funding package of 15 Western Avenue corridor projects that are included in the 70-project CREATE program. The projects include new track and signal systems that will ease congestion among five freight railroads, Amtrak and Metra.

The funding package comprises \$211 million from the state of Illinois, \$136 million from the Class I's, \$10.4 million from the TIGER IV program, \$12 million from the Illinois Commerce Commission and \$1 million from the city of Chicago. In addition, the state and Association of American Railroads recently reached an agreement through which the freight railroads increased their overall CREATE commitment by \$155 million, increasing their total contribution to \$325 million.

- The Vermont Agency of Transportation and New England Central Railroad announced they will receive a \$7.9 million TIGER IV grant to help fund track upgrades between St. Albans, Vt., and Montreal. Grant proceeds will be used to install new welded rail, ties and ballast on 19 miles of track, and upgrade bridges to raise speeds to 40 mph for freight trains and 59 mph for passenger trains. In addition, the weight limit on the upgraded track will increase from 263,000 to 286,000 pounds per car. The transportation department is providing \$7 million and the

railroad, \$3 million for the project.

- U.S. Sens. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) and Patty Murray (D-Wash.) announced the Washington State Department of Transportation will receive a \$10 million TIGER IV grant to help fund the relocation of 7.5 miles of BNSF Railway Co. mainline and switch spur tracks near the Freya Street interchange, and extension of an existing 5.5-mile bicycle/pedestrian trail more than one mile.
- U.S. Sens. Mark Pryor (D-Ark.) and John Boozman (R-Ark.), and Rep. Rick Crawford (R-Ark.) announced the city of West Memphis, Ark., will receive a \$10.9 million TIGER IV grant to expand rail infrastructure at the West Memphis Port. The project calls for strengthening existing rail to accommodate heavier cargo loads and extend an existing rail spur by 13,500 feet.
- U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen (D-Tenn.) announced the city of Memphis, Tenn., will receive a \$14.9 million TIGER IV grant for the Main Street to Main Street Multi-Modal Connector project, which calls for constructing a pathway or boardwalk on the 96-year-old Harahan Bridge that's still used by trains.

STANDSTILL PERIOD REACHED BETWEEN TEAMSTERS, REPUBLIC SERVICES

Joint Statement Issued By International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Republic Services

(WASHINGTON) – The International Brotherhood of Teamsters and Republic Services issued the following joint statement today:

“Representatives of Republic Services and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters met in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday. On the basis of the discussions at that meeting, they have agreed to a standstill period in connection with ongoing contract negotiations in various cities across the United States in order for the parties to attempt to resolve their differences at the bargaining table as to whether the Company will continue to participate in the Central States Pension Plan.

“This means that all picketing and related activities at various Company locations will be temporarily suspended, and that the lockout of workers at the Company’s facility in Evansville, Ind., will be temporarily suspended.

“The IBT and Republic will resume discussions shortly concerning a potential comprehensive resolution of the pension issues at those locations at which the Company currently contributes to Central States. Bargaining on other subjects will continue on a local basis.

“Both parties have committed to attempt in good faith to reach common ground and to restore a collaborative relationship that benefits Republic employees, the Company, the Union’s members and the communities Republic serves. The standstill will last for 30 days unless extended by agreement of the parties.”