

## **IBEW Committee on Political Education**

From the beginnings of the labor movement workers have recognized that the only power they have is through their collective voices. We can never match the amount of money that businesses are able to devote to lobbying for legislation to protect or further their interests. Everyone belongs to an association, organization or union to further their own goals. We are no different.

The 2008 Supreme Court *Citizens United* decision has opened the floodgate for corporations and wealthy individuals to spend unlimited money. The 2012 Republican Presidential primaries are already painting an ominous foreboding of negative, often distorted attack ads that proved to have an impact on voters. Many of the newer Super PACs that are raising millions of dollars have been able to skirt the law and have yet to identify their major donors.

**So why are we involved with politics?** Wisconsin, Ohio and just recently Indiana's repeal of the Right to Work laws show a concerted effort to weaken workers rights and their standard of living. You also need to look no further than the current gridlock in Congress to see why politics matter to union members and their families. President Obama had to make recess appointments to the NLRB and then the Republican controlled House threatened to defund it in order to keep it from functioning. Jobs bills that would have put tens of thousands of people back to work were killed to preserve the tax breaks for the very rich. It appears that the richest 1% in this country own the government and the 99% will suffer the consequences.

As Union members we voluntarily contribute towards COPE to further our interests. What are those interests? We believe these are the same interests that all workers have. We need protection for safe working conditions, we need high quality, affordable family health care, we deserve living wages for our efforts and we need immigration reform to prevent the flood of illegal, low wage immigrant labor that is currently preventing many of us from making a decent living. We want to see Social Security strengthened for ours and our children's' futures.

How do we achieve these goals? Individually it would almost impossible to reach out to our elected representatives and convince them to support our agendas. They are constantly being bombarded by lobbyists concerned with their particular interest. By pooling our resources together we are able to speak as one voice and convince lawmakers to listen to our needs.

Delegates adopted a resolution at the last International Convention to encourage local unions to work towards a goal of raising at least \$10 per member annually to contribute towards COPE. This money is raised voluntarily by the members most of which comes through payroll deduction, usually around \$.05 per hour. This money is then used to first, educate our members about the issues and then to motivate them into action to help accomplish our goals.

Local Unions focus year round on voter education, registration and then getting our members, their families and neighbors out to vote for issues that impact working families.

In the recent 2008 over 20% of voters came from union households. Many newly elected and re-elected legislators have acknowledged that they could not have won without labor's support. 2010 with a huge wave of discontent wiped out the gains that worker friendly politicians were pushing for.

The five 7<sup>th</sup> District state associations adopted resolutions in 2008 encouraging all full time local union officers to donate a minimum of \$2.00 per week and all other elected officers to donate a minimum of \$1.00 to lead each local's efforts.

Local unions that do not have payroll deduction raise money through a variety of methods. To be successful local unions work on this activity year round. If you are not currently donating and wish to begin contact your local union office.

#### 2011 7<sup>th</sup> District COPE Award for highest Per Capita Contributions



**IVP Gardner with LU 1141 delegation**

From the left, Bill Servati, Oklahoma City LU 1141 President, IVP Jonathan Gardner, LU 1141 Business Manager Joe Smith and Assistant Business Manager James Griffey

2011 7<sup>th</sup> District COPE Award for highest Total Dollar Contribution



**IVP Gardner with LU 611 Delegation**

From the left, Albuquerque, New Mexico LU 611 Assistant Business Manager Hollis Riley, IVP Gardner, ABM Alan Shepherd and ABM Joe Padilla