

For Immediate Release

Dateline: Harrisburg, PA

Time: 10:00 am, Tuesday, September 29, 2009

Contact: Frank Sirianni, President
Pennsylvania Building and Construction Trades Council
717-233-5726

**Hundreds of Union construction workers rally for Project Labor
Agreements on Capitol steps.**

Hundreds of unionized construction workers from all over Pennsylvania gathered today on the steps of the State Capitol building in support of Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) for use on construction projects funded with tax dollars.

The rally coincided with a press conference headed by State Representative John C. Bear (R-Lancaster) who is introducing legislation seeking to outlaw PLAs in the Commonwealth.

Frank Sirianni, the President of the Pennsylvania Building and Construction Trades Council, noted that a PLA on a publicly funded building project is the only way to guarantee that Pennsylvania taxpayer dollars spent on construction projects like roads, bridges, schools and prisons would stay in the Commonwealth and go to pay Pennsylvania workers.

“While Representative Bear, the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) and their allies in the Legislature would like to paint a different picture, the reality is that without PLAs, our state tax dollars are being siphoned off by out of state contractors and the benefits are going to workers from other states,” said Sirianni. “In fact, of the more than 5,000 publicly funded projects released in 2008, only a handful had PLAs. We think it is time for our state and local governments to stop catering to the big out of state contractors who feed on our tax dollars and put Pennsylvania skilled construction trades workers first.”

Sirianni said that PLAs were specifically designed to guarantee more job opportunities for Pennsylvania workers and contractors and that they also allowed contractors to access a pool of skilled and qualified local workers taking away the need for importing unskilled and many times undocumented workers that out of state contractors often use to undercut the bidding process on publicly funded projects.

“At a time when Pennsylvania is trying to work its way out of a budget crisis the last thing our state and local governments need to be doing is looking for ways to make it easier for unscrupulous out of state contractors to exploit unskilled and undocumented workers from states like Ohio, Alabama, Indiana, Arkansas and other states to win construction bids that result in shoddy workmanship and send our tax dollars to support some other state’s economy,” said Sirianni.

Unionized building trades members at the rally pointed out that PLAs put tighter controls on how Pennsylvania taxpayer’s dollars are spent, requiring local workers to have demonstrated skills and qualifications, and be subject to drug testing and criminal background checks. PLAs were also described as guaranteeing opportunities for minorities and women, decent health care benefits, a safer work environment, reductions in lost time on projects and better on time and on budget stability.

Contrary to the assertions of Legislators opposed to PLAs that such agreements “discriminated” against nonunion contractors, Sirianni noted that the National Labor Relations Act specifically prohibits both employers and unions from discriminating against employees based on their membership or non-membership in labor organizations and that the Pennsylvania Building and Construction Trades Council followed this Federal law.

“The fact of the matter is that many non-union contractors here in Pennsylvania bid on projects with PLAs and win those bids,” said Sirianni. “They then go on to complete those projects using unionized local crafts persons and still turn a profit. The myths that the ABC like to spread about PLAs are nothing more than a smokescreen to deny local Pennsylvania workers the opportunity to work close to home in a stable job funded by our tax dollars.”

For more information on Projects Labor Agreements please contact the Pennsylvania Building and Construction Trades Council at 717-233-5726.