

CHICAGO TEAMSTERS JOINT COUNCIL 25



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TEAMSTER WOMEN 'RAISE THE STAKES'

Annual Teamsters Women's Conference Kicks Off in Las Vegas

The ninth annual Teamsters Women's Conference kicked off Thursday in Las Vegas, Nevada, to a crowd of more than 800 Teamster women from throughout North America. The three-day conference, titled, "Teamster Women: Raising the Stakes", will focus on the current condition of our economy, as well as strategies for organizing, strengthening labor laws and building strong union workplaces.

"It's my 50th year as a Teamster and I believe in this union. I believe in you because a Teamster never gives up, never gives in and never backs down from a fight, and Teamster women know how to fight," said Teamsters General Secretary-Treasurer C. Thomas Keegel in his address to the Teamster women. "If you give a woman an opportunity, you'll not only get 100 percent, you'll get 125 percent, and she'll get the job done."

Keegel's address was part of a packed schedule of speakers, which was followed by a major rally in support of Republic Services recycling workers who are working to organize with the Teamsters.

ENERGY AND ENTHUSIASM

The conference opened with an address from Cheryl Johnson, who served on the Teamsters General Executive Board and as Director of the Women's Conference, among a myriad of other responsibilities within the Teamsters Union before retirement this summer. Johnson passed on warm wishes to her successor as Director of the Women's Conference, Sue Mauren, who is also President of Joint Council 32 and Secretary-Treasurer of Local 320.

"Teamster Women Raising the Stakes' means that all of us who are leaders in this union must fight for working families," Mauren said. "It's our job to make sure this economic recovery is about worker need and not Wall Street greed. It's about passing the Employee Free Choice Act so every worker has a right to join a union and get a good contract. It means each and every one of you in this room needs to capture the energy and enthusiasm from this conference and bring it back home to raise the stakes in your local unions, communities and the political arena."

The attendees also received a heartfelt welcome from Jim Santangelo, International Vice President and Secretary-Treasurer of Local 848 in Covina, California.

"You've got guts; you've got a backbone and you know how to fight. Keep up the fight and have a great conference," Santangelo said.

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ECONOMIC IMPACT

The state of women and the economy was a focal point of the first day of the conference. Special guest speakers included CNBC's Karen Finerman, who is also co-founder and CEO of Metropolitan Capital Advisors. Finerman spoke about the financial crisis and prospects for economic recovery. The attendees also heard from Barb Byers, Executive Vice President of the Canadian Labour Congress.

The plenary session included a presentation by the Teamsters Organizing Department, led by Director Jeff Farmer and Deputy Director Kim Keller.

In attendance to show their support for the Teamster women on this first day were numerous International Union Vice Presidents, including, Ken Hall; Pat Flynn; Walt Lytle; Brad Slawson; Tyson Johnson and George Tedeschi, as well as Trustee Frank Gallegos.

TEAMSTERS IN ACTION

The Women's Conference also spurred Teamsters into action, with an afternoon rally at the Las Vegas City Hall in support of Republic Services recycling workers. Republic Services fired 30 Latino workers at the company's Las Vegas recycling center in August after the company discovered workers were seeking union representation with Teamsters Local 631. Some of these workers had been employed by the company as long as 11 years.

Holding bold and colorful signs that read "Justice" and "Dignity", hundreds of Teamster women and men assembled on the steps of City Hall to make their voices heard. They joined Teamsters General Secretary-Treasurer Tom Keegel in showing Teamster power and demanding that Republic Services respect workers' rights.

"It's about justice, dignity and respect. We will not stand for these workers being fired unjustly and we have 1.4 million members who will not stand for it either," Keegel said.

The Teamsters Women's Conference continues Friday with special guest speakers, including, Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa; U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis; and Oscar B. Goodman, Mayor of Las Vegas. A number of educational workshops are also being offered throughout the day.

The Teamsters Women's Conference will continue through Saturday.