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LIUNA Launches Campaign to ‘Build America So America Works’

Aggressive and Progressive Construction Workers’ Union Vows Most Intensive and Sustained Effort Ever to Redirect Nation’s Resources to Basic Priorities

Campaign Includes Diverse Advertising, Massive Member-to-Member Voter Registration, New Source of Expert Information and Petition of 1 Million Voices

Washington, D.C. (May 5, 2008) – LIUNA today launched what the union said will be the most intensive and sustained effort ever to redirect the nation’s resources to taking care of America’s basics – its roadways, bridges, dams, railways, schoolhouses and other fundamentals the country depends on every day, but which have fallen into decay, lowering quality of life and weakening our economy.

“We are the nation that first put a man on the moon, built the original first-class interstate highway system, accomplished engineering feats such as the Hoover Dam and urban transit systems that move millions and left the world in awe of what we can do. We can reach those heights again and the men and women who build America are eager to do it,” said Terence M. O’Sullivan, General President of LIUNA, the Laborers’ International Union of North America.

“But in only a generation,” O’Sullivan said, “we have gone from the country that launched Apollo to a nation whose people can no longer be assured of crossing the Mississippi River safely or being safe from failing dams and levees. It’s time to build America so America works.”

According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, the basic infrastructure of the United States merits a near-failing grade due to years of neglect. Working people find it harder and harder to get to work or home to their families on time and spend an average of \$333 each in wasted gas and auto repairs due to an under-capacity and failing highway system.

Nearly a year after the tragic I-35W bridge collapse in Minneapolis, an estimated 150,000 bridges across America are still deficient. Nearly three years after unsafe levees flooded New Orleans killing thousands and dislocating hundreds of thousands, 3,300 dams and 150 levees across America continue to be unsafe. Nationally, the condition of U.S. schools rate a “D,” according to the ASCE, due to overcrowding and dilapidated structures. In 772 communities in 33 states, there are nearly 10,000 known sewage overflow problems threatening the environment and water supplies. And the neglect of America’s basics is occurring while developing nations – U.S. competitors in the global economy – are beginning to build superior infrastructure.

Building America isn’t just a priority if we are to physically take care of the country, it will also help create a healthy and sustainable economy, O’Sullivan said. According to the U.S. Federal Highway Administration, millions of good, family-supporting jobs can be supported by highway investment, and other infrastructure projects do the same.

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“America needs a new vision of what is acceptable and what is possible in caring for its basic foundation,” O’Sullivan said. “LIUNA aims to put forth that vision and help lead a movement to make it a reality.”

LIUNA’s effort, under the banner of “*Build America So America Works,*” will include:

- **Advertising outreach including print and online ads, as well as bus wraps, mobile billboards and radio and TV ads.** The ad effort begins today in metro Washington, D.C., to reach national elected officials and opinion-leaders. It will expand to Denver during the Democratic National Convention, and then to other communities in the U.S. Provocative ads will highlight both America’s possibilities and the real-life impact of its shortcomings.
- **“Make a Call to Build America,” a massive member-to-member voter registration effort.** The effort will include several national, union-wide virtual phone-banks with a goal of increasing the union’s number of registered voters by 10 percent before Election Day and helping to inform members about redirecting the nation’s resources to take care of priorities and create good jobs. The first Make a Call to Build America will be May 29.
- **The launching today of www.LiunaBuildsAmerica.org,** a new website that the union will strive to make the most important and comprehensive source of information about building America and the people who build America.
- **In-depth information for members and others** which shows that working people rely most on the basic infrastructure of America, suffer the most from its decay, and will broadly benefit from rebuilding and renewing it.
- **The launching of *The Petition to Build America*, with a goal of 1 million voices telling Congress and the country’s next president to “build America so America works.”** Supporters will be able to sign The Petition to Build America on paper, through websites online, by text-messaging and through a toll-free number.
- **Joining with allies in government and community organizations to strengthen the movement** to build America, and using broad news media outreach, including editorial boards and op-eds to put front and center the voices, hopes and aspirations of those who build, and want to build, America.

O’Sullivan said the campaign will be long-term. While the effort will include advocacy for specific legislation that helps build the country, it will encompass a bigger vision that goes beyond band-aids and offers solutions that can carry the country to success for future generations.

“Building America is about our nation and its people,” O’Sullivan said. “It is about saving lives, improving the quality of life, lifting our economy and living up to the American Dream.”

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The half-million members of LIUNA are on the forefront of the construction industry, a powerhouse of 10 million workers who build America.