

American fire and emergency services community to meet their local needs. It was an historic action.

Within a 30-day time period, from April 1 until May 2, the 32,000 fire and EMS departments across this country had the opportunity of applying for matching funds to meet their local needs and to meet the national responsibilities being placed on them in our effort to prepare for an incident involving a weapon of mass destruction.

Within that 30-day time period, there were 30,000 requests for funds from over 20,000 departments, from the smallest rural department in rural America, to the largest department in our largest city. They requested funds for breathing apparatus, for training, for new technology, for communication systems, for fire apparatus. The resultant 20,000 requests totaling 30,000 specific applications asked for \$3 billion of assistance. We only appropriated \$100 million.

Madam Speaker, there will be a lot of very unhappy and disappointed fire and emergency services departments. But we have made an historic beginning, and I would encourage our colleagues to join together and request that we increase the funding for that grant program to \$300 million in this year's appropriation process so that we can continue to meet the need of our domestic defenders.

Some would say this is too much money. Madam Speaker, local law enforcement officials across this country receive \$4 billion a year from the Federal Government. While I support our local law enforcement, our fire and EMS personnel should certainly receive no less. \$100 million is a long way from \$4 billion.

So I say to our colleagues today as we understand the need that has now been documented for the first time, \$3 billion in requests from every congressional district in this country. I would ask our colleagues in the House and the other body to join together and request the appropriators to exceed the President's request of \$100 million and fully fund the authorized amount which this fiscal year is \$300 million.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to contact the appropriators and make the request to our good chairman, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG), who was a tireless advocate last session, and the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), the subcommittee chair, to include the fully authorized amount in the appropriation process.

PROTECTING AND PROMOTING THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague,

the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR), who organized some of us to come to the floor and discuss the importance of protecting and promoting the rights of workers to organize.

Every year our government spends tens of millions of dollars of our tax money to support efforts around the globe to promote democracy. One of the ways that we measure society's success in establishing a democratic system of government and an open society is how well its laws protect the rights of the poor, the rights of workers, and the rights of its citizens to speak, to organize, and to act collectively on their own behalf.

This is a message that we send every day from the floor of this Congress. We condemn, as we did today, those governments that oppress workers, that shield unscrupulous employers and empower the elites of society. Democracy is not measured by how well you guard the affluent and the powerful, but by how well you protect the rights of the weakest and the most vulnerable.

Thirty-six years ago, in 1935, Congress enacted the National Labor Relations Act to address the inequality of bargaining power between the employees who do not possess the freedoms of association or liberty of contract and the employers. In the depth of the Great Depression, our government understood that working men and women could not challenge employers who, through their wealth and power and associations, could exploit labor if workers themselves were not protected in their efforts to organize. That was a decision born of decades of brutal, bloody, and crippling warfare in the mines, the factories, the wharves, and the workshops of America.

But today, as the men and women born, along with the NLRA retire, 65 years later that promise to America's working people remains unfulfilled despite many achievements by organized labor on behalf of America's working families.

Unions have made tremendous improvements in the quality of life and standard of living of their members and their families. Union workers earn 28 percent more than nonunion workers, and union women earn 31 percent more than nonunion women workers. Unions have made dramatic improvements in the economic status of minority Americans: African American union members earn 37 percent more than non-unionists, and Hispanic workers increase their earnings about 55 percent through union membership.

Ninety percent of union workers have pension benefits compared to only 76 percent of nonunion workers, and 86 percent have health care benefits compared to 74 percent of nonunion workers. Only 50 percent of the nonunion have short-term disability benefits, compared to 73 percent of union workers. And the union workers, on an aver-

age, enjoy twice the job stability of their nonunion counterparts.

American workers and their families, whether union or not, enjoy a higher quality of life, greater freedoms, greater opportunities, greater political influence and greater health because of the union movement in the United States. Because of the many hard-fought battles over the last century and a quarter, most Americans can take a weekend off. Most Americans only work 8 hours a day rather than 10 or 12. In their later years, most Americans have pension plans, health insurance, as well as Social Security and Medicare that union support made possible and protects today.

Given this great heritage, many question why the number of workers who are members of unions has decreased. Perhaps unions are victims of their own success at times. They have raised the quality of life for millions who never carried a union card. But there is another explanation and the Congress needs to pay it closer attention and address the shortcomings of current labor law.

Congress sends millions of dollars to build democratic institutions in other countries, and one of the measurements of success is the creation of a free trade movement with the right to strike and engage in collective bargaining and political activity. That is a measure of political health. But it is often not the case in the United States.

Unions and the men and women who would form and join them are the victims of grossly unfair bias under the current labor laws. The decks are stacked against those seeking to create a union. The law grants numerous advantages to employers that facilitate their efforts to prevent fair elections and successful collective bargaining.

Let me give you a few examples. The Wagner Act says a laborer may not be fired for trying to form or join a union. However, the only remedy for an unlawful discharge is to grant the worker back pay and reinstatement. As anyone familiar with labor law knows, it can easily take a year or more to litigate the unlawful discharge case. While that may be fine for an employers' association, few workers can afford to go several years without a job. Nor does the back pay of money that should have been earned to compensate a worker for the damages suffered as a result of having no income for 6 months. The worker receives no compensation to account for the new clothes that the worker could not provide for his child. The worker receives no compensation for the car or home that was repossessed. These are just the beginning of some of the unfair labor practices that exist in current law in this country. We will continue this discussion.