

Voices *in Unity* ★★  
STRENGTH *in Solidarity*

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# CONVENTION REPORTER

## *Safe and Healthy Workplaces*

The fifth and final day of the BCTGM 38th Constitutional Convention began with a mariachi band and a slide show of delegates throughout the week. BCTGM International Representative James Rivers delivered an inspiring invocation.

Introducing the day's theme, *Safe and Healthy Workplaces*, Hurt said, "Everyone in this room knows that the safety and well being of our membership is paramount. It is why, throughout history, the labor movement has fought so hard to ensure that workplaces in Canada and the United States are safe for workers."

He noted that the necessity of safe workplaces was part of the drive for the eight-hour week and a primary reason that child labor was outlawed. Additionally, labor unions throughout North America have continued to fight for legislation and regulations to protect working people, Hurt explained.

"I do want to stress that it is not our responsibility to provide a safe workplace for our members. It is our employers responsibility to provide a safe and healthy workplace for all workers in North America," Hurt said.

He pointed out that many employers are not taking this responsibility very seriously. "More than 5,000 workers in the United States die each year from workplace accidents. Millions of American workers will become injured or suffer an illness on the job this year. These are horrible statistics. And these are statistics that must change," Hurt said.

Hurt posed a question to delegates, "Why are these deaths and injuries still happening?"

"For one, corporate interests in the halls of Congress and Parliament have had considerable sway over workplace protections in both Canada and the United States.

"For example, the Occupational Safety and Health

Administration, part of the Department of Labor, was severely handicapped during the Bush Administration.

"Underfunding and understaffing meant that OSHA didn't have the resources to effectively monitor America's workplaces. Employers could simply decide to ignore this country's health and safety laws. OSHA's penalties were also woefully inadequate, not offering much of a threat to offending employers. And even when employers were cited and fined, the employer was usually able to get the fine reduced or eliminated, by simply promising to fix the problem," Hurt explained.

"But that doesn't fix the families that lose loved ones. And it doesn't fix the lives of millions of workers who suffer debilitating injuries and life-threatening illnesses.

"We know that there are some employers out there that truly want to protect their workforce and follow the law. Some of your employers do just that. But for every good corporate citizen, there are a dozen that turn their backs on their workers," he said.

What can be done about this? "For one, we can make sure that in all our workplaces we have effective and vigilant health and safety committees. I mentioned earlier that it is not our responsibility to provide a safe work environment for our members. But what we can do, is push and prod our employers to make that work environment as safe as it can possibly be," Hurt explained.

"We can pressure our politicians to pass legislation that will make employers think twice about shoddy workplace practices," he added.

"I would like to note that our International Union has been actively involved in helping to draft regulations regarding combustible dust, diacetyl, and injury reporting requirements. OSHA has specifically sought out our input because of our position within the food

and milling sectors. These and other regulations we are working on will help make workplaces in the food processing industry safer,” Hurt said.

## U.S. Rep. Titus Addresses Delegates

U.S. Representative Dina Titus (D-Nevada) began her address by telling delegates that it is an exciting time to be in Congress, calling her job “fast and furious.”

The Congresswoman noted, “I would not be here if not for organized labor. So thank you for the good work you do,” she said.

Titus detailed her work on the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor and noted the important health and safety measures the committee works on.

She informed delegates that in May she toured the Hostess bakery in Henderson, Nevada with BCTGM International Representative Marco Mendoza and Local 37 President Danny Polanco. “I learned all there is to know when it comes to the production of bread. I saw the machines, the ovens and most importantly, I met the people who make the bread. I will never look at a slice of bread the same,” said Titus.

She noted the importance of labor law reform and told delegates that she is a proud co-sponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act.

Titus informed delegates that there are several important worker safety bills that are being considered by Congress. Specifically, Titus noted the July 30 passage of legislation to extend whistleblower protections to workers engaged in oil and gas exploration, drilling, production, or cleanup on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS).

Titus concluded her address to delegates with the famous quote by Mother Jones, “Pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living!”

## Committee Reports

The following Convention Committees met and debated the listed resolutions. The Committees’ recommendation and delegate action follows each resolution.

### Resolution Committee

Resolution Number 20. *Safe Jobs for All*: **ADOPTED**

Resolution Number 19. *Protecting America’s Workers Act*: **ADOPTED**

Resolution Number 36. *Support in the Education of the Beck Rule*, submitted by Local 9: **NON CONCURRENCE**

## Constitution Committee

Resolution Number 31. *Article XIII, Section 1.1 (New), Per Capita Tax Reports*, submitted by Local 55: **ADOPTED AS AMENDED**

Resolution Number 32. *Increase in Salaries of International Officers*, submitted by Local 102: **ADOPTED AS AMENDED**

## Closing Remarks of Executive Officers

In his closing remarks, Executive Vice President Joe Thibodeau urged the delegates to bring what they learned during the convention back to their local unions.

“I am honored and humbled by the trust you have placed in me. I look forward to working with President Hurt and Secretary Treasurer Durkee as we strive to represent your best interests. I say a heartfelt thank you for the opportunity to serve the membership of the BCTGM. God bless you and God bless the BCTGM,” concluded Thibodeau.

Secretary-Treasurer David B. Durkee bid farewell to the delegation by saying, “I want to tell you that we don’t do what we do for the good times...but we do it for the bad times. The fight rises up in us and no matter what, this is when we get excited and we will let no one take advantage of you. God speed my friends, safe travels home.”

International President Frank Hurt adjourned the Convention by thanking all delegates, Executive Officers, Vice Presidents and International staff. “I know that you will all go home better prepared to give the information you learned here back to your membership. Thank you for entrusting us as your leaders. We pledge to do our very best,” Hurt concluded.

All photography of the 38th Constitutional Convention will be available to view and purchase online through Hank deLespinasse Studios, the official photographer of the 2010 Convention.

The Convention photo site is:  
**[www.bctgm2010conv.com](http://www.bctgm2010conv.com)**