

GRASSROOTS INVOLVEMENT

For those of us in the labor movement, grassroots political activity is like oxygen: If it went away, we'd go away.

Never was that point clearer than this past summer, when the American maritime industry pulled together and gained enough support to defeat a Congressional amendment that could have wiped out tens of thousands of U.S. jobs, many of which are held by union members. This particular amendment involved the Food for Peace Program or PL-480, and we were up against the White House, members of Congress, major editorial boards across the country and several high-powered special-interest groups who wanted to sink us.

We won, and the key to victory was good old-fashioned grassroots action. Our members contacted their elected representatives in D.C. Our organizations – unions and businesses alike – took our pro-worker, pro-America message directly to Capitol Hill. Significantly, we earned strong bipartisan support, proving once again that our issues matter on both sides of the aisle, and our loyalties lie with those who support America's working families, regardless of political party.

Of course, this is just one example, albeit a significant one. Every day, we're still fighting political battles over so-called right-to-work laws, comp-time legislation, paycheck deception, project labor agreements, retirement security, and the list goes on. And although we know we can't triumph every time, like the old lottery slogan says, we've got to play to win.

In this same vein, our grassroots efforts must and will extend to election seasons at every level of government. Once again, electing pro-worker representatives doesn't guarantee success, but we all know what happens when anti-worker, anti-union governors and senators and congressmen take office. It's a never-ending cycle and a never-ending mission, but it's the system we've got.

As anyone who's participated in a phone bank or done a precinct walk or handed out political flyers knows, grassroots action isn't glamorous. A lot of it is behind the scenes. It involves sacrifice and it comes with no assurance

of winning. It often takes long hours. Heady photo ops at the Capitol or the White House are very much the exception.

Clearly, the MTD understands all of these truths. We can compare it to a brand new American-flag ship that looks beautiful from the outside but that won't be able to sail without everything properly in place down below in the engine room. Without sustained, effective grassroots involvement, our movement would hit the rocks.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Maritime Trades Department, AFL-CIO, its affiliates and Port Maritime Councils recognize the importance of grassroots action to America's working families, and we will continue to treat such activities with utmost urgency, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the MTD, its affiliates and Port Maritime Councils will promote trade unionism in every possible way, including educating the American public and political representatives at every level of government.