

# The Peggy Browning Fund Newsletter

*Educating Law Students on the Rights and Needs of Workers*

Fall 2006

Joseph Lurie, President

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## PBF President Exhorts Law Schools at Workers' Rights Conference

PBF President **Joe Lurie** welcomed nearly 140 law students to our eighth annual National Law Students Workers' Rights Conference on October 13 & 14 by encouraging them to work for social justice through practicing public interest labor law.

Joe discussed the rise of worker centers, which are community-based organizations advocating for the rights of workers who have no union representation. He urged the students to work with their law schools to establish employment law clinics for workers who need legal assistance.\*

The two-day conference was the inaugural event at the impressive new Lane Kirkland Center at the National Labor College in Silver Spring, MD.

Leading the plenary sessions were **Gabriela Lemus**, newly-appointed Executive Director for the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA), and keynote speaker **Patricia A. Friend**, International President of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, AFL-CIO. In workshops, students participated in discussions about the basic tenets of Labor Law and the National Labor Relations Act, dialogued about the influence of global international labor law on domestic policy, learned first hand about the rewards of labor law practice from veterans in the field, and were exposed to the challenges of protecting immigrant workers in the workplace.

On the opening night of the conference, following the short film *Couch Encounter (Encuentro con el Sillón)*, Ms. Lemus shared personal experiences of helping immigrant workers who were denied back pay, were exposed to poor working conditions, and were left to fend for themselves against bad employers because of their legal status. Students joined in with thoughts on global trade agreements, the role of immigrant workers in the early development of the nation, domestic policy failures, the effects of the war on terror, and their hopes for the future political landscape.

Saturday's luncheon was energized by the powerful remarks of keynote speaker Pat Friend, passionate leader of, and tireless advocate for, flight attendants. Ms. Friend spoke about the phenomenal struggle of her union in the last half century, as they succeeded in gaining fairer pay, establishing their work as a legitimate career, removing mandatory forced retirement at age 32 or upon marriage, and eliminating discriminatory hiring practices based on gender, weight, height, and marital status.

This inspiring story is darkened by the struggle the union has faced in the shadow of bankruptcy filings by airline after airline in the years after September 11, 2001. Ms. Friend encouraged students to investigate bankruptcy law because workers so often bear the brunt of a corporation's financial squeezing while

management continues to receive big bonuses and compensation.

In addition to sparking intellectual curiosity and lively debates, the conference connected participants with other like-minded students and professionals who recognize the importance of the labor movement in shaping the domestic and international landscape for all human rights.

Special thanks are due to the many donors who supported this event and especially to the NLC staff for their herculean efforts as they raced to finish the new facility in time for this event.

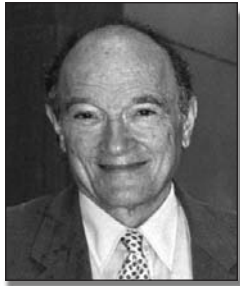


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\*Joe's proposal speaks to the heart of the mission of The Peggy Browning Fund. In November, Joe will be meeting with clinical representatives of the major Philadelphia law schools and area worker centers to explore how they can best work together.

The official registration and financial information of The Peggy Browning Fund may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

# President's Message



**Joe Lurie**  
*PBF President*

I write to ask you to consider making a contribution to The Peggy Browning Fund as you consider your year-end charitable contributions.

Interest in workers' rights and needs continues to grow dramatically among law students. Over the years, thousands have visited our website and inquired into our programs. This year we received over 350 applications for the 31 fellowships we offered. In 2007, we aim to offer 36 fellowships. Likewise, interest in our National Law Students Workers' Rights Conference continues to grow. This year we hosted nearly 140 law students from all over the country.

Many law students want to know how they can work for economic and social justice in these troubled times. Now more than ever they are turning to The Peggy Browning Fund. We are determined to respond – to focus not only on high-sounding words but on encouraging law students to pursue legal careers representing the rights and interests of the working people who so badly need their help.

As we complete our ninth year, we are proud of our accomplishments :

- Giving law students direct opportunities to influence the lives of workers.
- Providing our mentor organizations with talented law students eager to work.
- Helping working men and women through our fellows' advocacy.

- Bringing together law students from all over the nation at our annual conference to learn, discuss workers' rights and meet like-minded individuals who hope to become activist lawyers working for economic and social justice.
- Honoring outstanding labor leaders and union-side labor lawyers who have spent their lives fighting for the rights of working people. Our annual events have given members of the labor community an opportunity to show their respect and appreciation to these exceptional men and women.
- Many law students who have gone through the program are now working as lawyers for the National Labor Relations Board, labor unions, union-side law firms, and worker centers.

We continually receive requests from workers' rights organizations asking for PBF fellows. In 2007, with your help we will be able to increase the number of law students receiving our fellowships and attending our conference.

We would like to satisfy the demand for our services. We are determined to do so, but wishes and determination are not enough. We need financial support to put our dreams into action.

We run an extremely tight operation, but we also have huge responsibilities and we cannot succeed without your help.

We need you now. If you believe our mission is important, if you are proud of what we have accomplished, if you share our hope for the future, then please contribute to The Peggy Browning Fund before the end of the year.

Together we can make a difference.



On a balmy evening in early June, The Peggy Browning Fund hosted a reception to honor the eminent George Cohen, Esq. (Bredhoff & Kaiser) in Washington, DC. The reception, held in the lobby of the AFL-CIO, was exceptionally well attended by over 200 well-wishers. Following praise from speakers representing every aspect of his professional life in labor law, George engaged the audience with his modest words, comical anecdotes, and thanks for the well-deserved honor. The success of the event was evident in the warm exchanges, broad smiles, and fervent story-telling of the guests as they lingered into the night.

# Sharing the Fellowship Experience

Every year The Peggy Browning Fund sets aside a half day to meet with that year's PBF Fellows and their Mentors. This "Wrap-Up Workshop and Luncheon" provides a much-anticipated opportunity for the fellows to share their summer experiences and for The Fund to receive valuable feedback on the program.

On October 13, twenty nine PBF Fellows and more than a dozen Mentors and guests attended the luncheon at the new Lane Kirkland Center at the National Labor College. Both the food and the new facility were a hit. For several hours, the students presented and discussed their fellowship experiences. Some of their comments are listed below.



**Jason Davis**, the PBF fellow placed at the Screen Actors Guild in New York this past summer, wrote a statement outlining the union's position that a stunt performer should be considered a statutory employee and not an independent contractor under the National Labor Relations Act. He also made an opening statement on an arbitration case on which SAG received a favorable judgement. He visited field representatives at movie sets, sat in on collective bargaining negotiations, and was able to speak with SAG members who worked on diversity and government-relations issues.

**Anjetta McQueen** was placed at AFSCME in Washington, DC. In her fellowship essay she describes the experience as "intensely educational—a crash course in real-life legal research and problem-solving." She researched statutory interpretation on a sexual harassment law memo, worked on a campaign finance project and a copyright infringement issue, and dealt with administrative law by writing challenges to NLRB decisions. Anjetta particularly enjoyed participating in a labor protest outside the NLRB with representatives from other AFL-CIO unions to demonstrate their stance on the Kentucky River case.

There were many more students whose fellowship experience opened their eyes to the depth of public interest labor law and the rewards that giving back to the working community generates. It is our hope that the insights gained during their Peggy Browning Fellowships will inspire them to fight for social and economic justice throughout their lifetimes.

**Arthur Traynor** chose to pursue a fellowship with the United Mine Workers of America in Fairfax, VA because he knew that recent coal mine tragedies and an ambitious organizing drive of the world's largest energy company would provide a challenging work experience. Within the first few weeks, Art was able to get meaningful legislative experience when he was given the task of contacting every Democratic Senator's office to urge passage of the House version of the MINER Act. Using contacts he had made with Senate staff members, he then helped to get support for Senator Byrd's hold on the nomination of Richard Strickler to the head of the Mine Safety and Health Administration. Much of his time was spent researching and writing memos for the union, but the highlight of Art's fellowship was touring a working mine in West Virginia with the Assistant Vice President of the Union.

**Juliana Diaz** was the Peggy Browning Fellow placed at Friends of Farmworkers in Philadelphia. She spent her summer learning about the challenges facing the migrant farm worker community and educating workers on their rights. The majority of her time was spent speaking with plaintiffs, mostly temporary H2B workers, for a large opt-in class action case that Friends of Farmworkers was bringing against a national landscaping company. Juliana expressed her satisfaction at having so much client interaction and being able to see first hand how her work was helping people.

# The Peggy Browning Fund

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“... We must strive together to maintain our vigilance ensuring that workers receive all that is justly due them under the laws of our country. We must make sure that those protections are not diluted or abused, particularly through our antiquated corporate bankruptcy laws that only serve the wealthy stockholders and corporate executives. We must make sure that our rights as workers to engage in self-help are not further diluted. We must fight – in the courts if need be, on the streets if need be – to make sure our right to strike is not taken away. ...

“I can tell you that many of our battles will be fought in the courts. With diminishing power at the collective bargaining table, with an anti-worker government in power, with greed and excessive wealth considered virtues in our corporate culture, we as workers have fewer and fewer avenues open to us to help in our struggle. We must learn to creatively use the legal system. You can certainly help with this.”

*Patricia A. Friend, Keynote Speaker*

*Eighth Annual Peggy Browning Conference*

*To read the full speech, visit [www.peggybrowningfund.org](http://www.peggybrowningfund.org)*

## Upcoming Events – Mark Your Calendars

*Watch our website for details.*

**January 12, 2007 – Application Deadline** for 2007 Peggy Browning Fund Fellowship Program.

**January 25, 2007** – Reception in New York, NY **honoring Terry O’Sullivan**, International President of Laborers’ International Union of North America, and labor lawyer **Thomas Kennedy, Esq.**, of Kennedy, Jennick, and Murray, P.C.

**March, 2007** – in Philadelphia, PA – **The Peggy Browning Fund’s Tenth Anniversary Dinner.**