

# The Peggy Browning Fund Newsletter

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

Spring 2006

Joseph Lurie, President

Mary Anne Moffa, Executive Director

## Law Students Share Passion for Justice at Workers' Rights Conference

Last fall The Peggy Browning Fund celebrated a wildly successful Seventh Annual Worker's Rights Conference with 150 attendees, the largest number of law students the conference has hosted to date. The conference, held on October 14th & 15th at the National Labor College in Silver Spring, Maryland, created much-needed solidarity among students, and as one student described it, generated "dynamic, healthy, [and] thought-provoking discussions."

The conference began on Friday afternoon with an introductory workshop on basic labor law. After a networking reception and dinner that evening, students viewed the PBS Frontline documentary, *Is Wal-Mart Good for America?* Larry Mishel, President of the Economic Policy Institute, then led an informal discussion.

Early Saturday morning, students were welcomed by keynote speaker David Bonior, the former long-term Congressman from Michigan and current Chair of American Rights at Work. Mr. Bonior's words ignited the passion of the students as he spoke eloquently about the crisis facing the labor movement and the hostile environment that workers confront when creating and utilizing their collective power. He emphasized that workers' rights are basic human rights which today are being threatened. Bonior's heartfelt words and critical analysis gave weight to the day's discussions and provided context for the urgent need for advocates of workers' rights.

The day continued with four rounds of workshops presented by labor law practitioners, academics, and activists in the labor movement: *Organizing Challenges and Real World Strategies*, *Representing Immigrant Workers*, *The Rewards of Labor Law Practice*, and *The Changing Role of the Labor Movement*. Each session combined the specific theme with personal experiences of the speaker and informal discussions by the students. One participant reflected that "...the workshops were great, [a] perfect blend of re-energizing, inspirational, and extremely educational and enlightening."

Perhaps the greatest success of the conference was not found in the formal structure but was created indirectly by the students and speakers themselves as they shared their

ideas, knowledge, and passion. As one student wrote afterward, "This conference was truly inspirational! It has given me the courage to pursue my true dream. Now I know that I'm not alone in my beliefs. Thank you!"

Conference Committee Member Dennis P. Walsh explained, "The Conference is a tremendous opportunity for law students from all over the country to get together and share their enthusiasm for the labor movement and for workers' rights. It is a true embodiment of The Peggy Browning Fund's mission to encourage law students to become part of the struggle to advance the rights of workers and their families to organize and pursue better futures for themselves."

Unfortunately, the huge demand in attendance for 2005's conference had a downside. Fifty-four students were turned away due to resource constraints. In 2006, due in no small part to rising fuel prices, we expect to face higher travel and lodging costs but still hope to increase attendance at the Conference to a total of 175 students.

Reflecting on last year, we hope to make the Eighth Annual Conference, to be held this October 13th and 14th, another resounding success! You can help us reach this goal by sending a contribution in the enclosed envelope or by donating online via our website.



All Photos by MAM

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.

# What Motivates Peggy Browning Fellows?

The summer of 2006 will see thirty new Peggy Browning fellows enter the labor movement at mentor sites around the country. They will be placed in unions, legal aid organizations, labor law firms, and the NLRB. Within ten weeks, they will have encountered work experiences unlike any they would find in the classroom.

The students who are chosen for the fellowship program not only have strong academic records, they are usually drawn to labor law for very personal reasons. Some of our fellows grew up in union families, witnessing the trials and tribulations of working parents who fought for health care and job security.

One saw the loss of dignity in her colleagues who were forced to either work overtime or lose their jobs in the health care industry. Several realized their passion for justice as undergrads when they were exposed to the need for a living wage for their schools' groundskeepers, housecleaners, and janitors. One student knew her calling when she was exposed to the staggering child labor conditions while studying abroad in Brazil.



*Fellows Valerie Walker & Ana Polanco at our 2005 Wrap-Up Workshop.*

Another student is a first generation immigrant who was forced to work for less than minimum wage in garment factories and restaurants. Her goal is to expose this isolated community to their legal rights. Still others come from backgrounds aiding migrant workers, domestic violence victims, working as union organizers, legal aids, and campaigning for progressive politics.

The unifying factor in all of our students is an intense drive to use their talent to improve the lives of workers. Their passion represents the strongest chance of success for the progressive labor movement



*Some of our 2005 Fellows who worked in Washington, DC.*

## Where are They Now?

**Angie Cowan**, 2004-2005 Peggy Browning Fellow at the Chicago Newspaper Guild - After graduating in May 2005, Angie began pursuing a career in labor law as an attorney at Allison, Slutsky & Kennedy in Chicago, IL. At our reception honoring Tom Balanoff and Gil Cornfield in Chicago last fall, she spoke eloquently about her experiences as a summer fellow.

**Autumn Gonzalez**, 2004 Peggy Browning Fellow at UNITE HERE - When we heard from Autumn in November 2005, she was working as a field rep/internal organizer at UNITE HERE on the California Indian Gaming campaign while preparing for the bar exam and keeping her eyes open for legal jobs.

**Matthew Gruber**, 2004 Peggy Browning Fellow at the Major League Baseball Players Association - Matt graduated last year and took a job as Assistant Counsel with the National Treasury Employees Union in Washington, DC.

**Andrew Hamilton**, 2004 Peggy Browning Fellow at the UAW - After graduation in the spring of 2005, Andrew began working in the research department of SEIU/District

1199 in Ohio. He reported that this draws heavily on his legal training and prior labor movement experience and recommended that young lawyers who care about the future of the labor movement should consider strategic campaign research as an alternative to traditional labor-law practice.

**Jennifer Kaufman**, 2003 Peggy Browning Fellow at the NLRB's Contempt Litigation and Compliance Branch - In March 2005, Jennifer joined another of our alumni, George Faraday, as an attorney on the staff of NLRB Member Dennis Walsh.

**William Massey**, 2002 Peggy Browning Fellow at The Workplace Project - For almost two years, Bill has been practicing labor law at Gladstein, Reif & Meginniss in New York City.

**Jason Valtos**, 1998 Peggy Browning Fellow at the NLRB - Jason was named a Principal of Osborne Law Offices in Washington, DC last fall. He has worked there nearly five years. Jason has remained active with the Fund and will be helping raise funds for our Workers' Rights Conference this year.

# Peggy Browning Fund Honors Social Justice Champions

In recent months, we have continued our tradition of honoring labor lawyers and labor leaders who have fought for workers and their families. Their selfless work inspires the next generation of public interest labor lawyers. Hundreds of supporters joined us at receptions in Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia as we honored these social justice champions for their lifetime achievements.



Joe Lurie, PBF Advisory Board Member Allison Beck, Anne Vladeck (daughter of honoree Judith Vladeck) and Dennis Walsh, Member of the NLRB and the PBF Board of Directors, at our reception in January in New York.

Honoree Ted Kirsch, President of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, making a dynamic acceptance speech after receiving the Peggy Browning Fund Award in March.



Emcee Marv Gittler, honorees Gil Cornfield and Tom Balanoff, guest Harold Katz, and PBF President Joe Lurie at our reception in Chicago in November.



To find out more about these honorees, visit [www.peggybrowningfund.org/fund\\_events.html](http://www.peggybrowningfund.org/fund_events.html)

We received the following note from one of our long-time supporters:

*"I was in a hearing ... yesterday. There were two unions involved. ... Both unions were represented by bright young lawyers, Lance Geren and a young man named Milz from Spear Wilderman. They seemed to know each other and I asked how. 'Oh, we were Peggy Browning Fellows!' What you did to carry on Peggy's legacy was wonderful. Enclosed is a modest contribution."*

We're proud to receive compliments like this one. Won't you help us continue our work? If you've already sent in a contribution, perhaps you could pass along the enclosed response envelope to someone else who might be interested in helping us.

## Acknowledgements, Memorials & Tributes

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**The Peggy Browning Fund**, 1818 Market Street, Suite 2300, Philadelphia, PA 19103

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“... I want to extend my praise to the Peggy Browning Fellows who are all in attendance today. They are the stars who’ve made great contributions to their mentor organizations and they have great careers ahead of them. And to all the students attending the conference—your energy, enthusiasm, and dedication to public interest labor law gives us renewed optimism for the future of the labor movement. ...

“You are training to be lawyers and you know the law and the legal system. But I want to challenge you today to think about workers rights beyond just a legal framework. At a fundamental level, workers’ rights are **human rights**—and among these inalienable freedoms is the right to be treated fairly.”

*David Bonior, Keynote Speaker  
Seventh 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.*

**June 8, 2006** – Reception in Washington, DC **honoring George H. Cohen**, respected labor lawyer (Bredhoff & Kaiser).

**October 13, 2006** – **Wrap-Up Workshop** for Summer Fellows in Silver Spring, MD.

**October 13 & 14, 2006** – **Eighth Annual National Law Students’ Workers’ Rights Conference**, at the National Labor College in Silver Spring, MD.