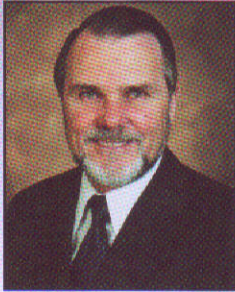


Healthcare and the Iraq War

Speech by Bob Balganorth, California State Building Trades Council, to the State Fed Legislative Conference on April 16 in Sacramento



Last month I attended the national conferences of the IBEW and the National Building Trades conference, where Senator Joe Biden spoke very passionately about the tragedy and the cost of the war in Iraq, and about the problems in this country that could be addressed with the money we're spending on the war.

At the IBEW conference, they showed a tough, dramatic and extremely powerful seven-minute video that discusses the failures of George W. Bush and his administration. I want to show that video now. (see the "Can't Make It Here Anymore" video on Youtube.com: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jTW0y6kazWM>)

Now that you've seen the video, you may be wondering what that has to do with our push for healthcare. After all, that is the theme of our conference.

Senator Biden gave me the answer to that question when he spoke at the Building Trades Legislative Conference. He discussed the calamity of the Iraq War,

and then he ticked off a list of items the war money could have paid for.

One of those items was a health care plan for every American.

Let's think about the unmet needs we have in California and the nation, and what our unions should push for.

The truth is that the Iraq War and health care for Americans are connected.

The truth is that there is a drastic need for a healthcare plan that would cover everyone, including 47 million un-insured Americans, six-and-a-half million of them in California.

Often the un-insured are people who hold two jobs just to make ends meet. Every night a young couple goes to bed hoping that the complications with the wife's pregnancy doesn't cause a premature birth, because if it does, the family will lose its' home just to pay the medical bills.

Countless parents know that if their child gets strep throat, they have to take a day off of work, carry that child in their arms and spend hours in the emergency room begging for care.

Who can have the gall to argue that we don't have the money to insure people when Congress has already appropriated \$416 billion dollars to fight what may be the most dangerous and unnecessary war in human history.

This is a war that is destabilizing a

region of the world that has been volatile since the dawn of recorded history.

This is a war that put Iran and other nations in the area on a hell-bound race to develop nuclear weapons that could end civilization as we know it.

This is a war that will produce more amputees than any conflict since the Civil War.

Senator Biden estimated that the eventual cost of the war, even if the troops are sent home tomorrow, will reach \$1 trillion, \$200 billion dollars!

That's because of the huge costs of medical care for troops who have been horribly wounded, the price of rebuilding elements of our society.

Biden said, "We invaded Iraq because Bush and his people are so arrogant that they thought they could rewrite history."

Let's bring this a little closer to home.

As of last week, nearly 3,300 American troops had lost their lives in Iraq, 341 of them were Californians.

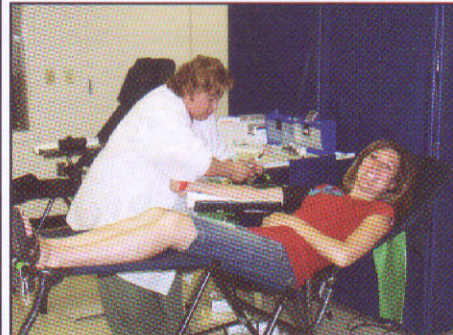
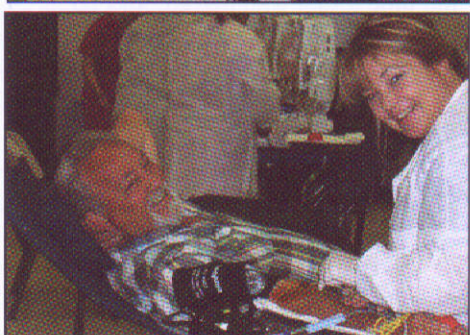
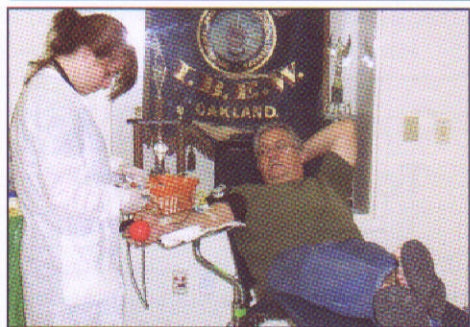
As I speak, nearly 900 California Army and Air National Guard troops are deployed to Iraq. More than 6,000 members of the California Guard have served there since 9-11. And thousands of other California active duty troops have done tours in Iraq.

It's time! It's time to bring the troops

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Giving the Gift of Life...

On Re-Sign Day, May 7th, Local 595 members, friends, 595 office workers, NECA members, and friends donated 42 units of blood for the Red Cross. Below, Organizing Director Matt Maloon thanks and congratulates Doug Hall for organizing the successful effort.



Healthcare and Iraq

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home. It's time to stop the flow of blood. It's time to get on with the business of binding up the nation's wounds.

The dead and wounded troops and the broken lives they leave behind is tragic enough. But there's another tragedy associated with this war. It has to do with opportunity costs.

Most of you know that an opportunity cost is the value of something you give up in order to pay for something else. Here's just a few of the opportunity costs of the Iraq war.

We could insure every kid in America who doesn't have health insurance. We could double cancer research funding. We could treat every American whose diabetes or heart disease is now going untreated.

In fact, we could run all those programs for 10 years and it wouldn't cost even half of the \$1.2 trillion that this war will eventually cost.

There's more.

We could invest a big chunk of money in national security for our ports, for our big city targets, for our airlines and for training our first responders.

In California alone, the money that we have spent on this pointless war could have paid for nearly 7 million kids to attend a year of Head Start.

We could have provided health insurance for more than 31 million California children. We could have built 475,000 new California affordable housing units.

Brothers and sisters, we won the last election. We now have a majority in both houses of congress. It's time to demand more. It's time for unions to push and make things happen.



At the California State Federation Legislative Conference in Sacramento April 16-17, Healthcare Reform was Labor's number one priority.

For too long, we've been letting other people set the agenda. The enemies of labor and working people always try to tell us it's too expensive. We simply can't afford it.

Now I don't believe that, and I don't think you believe it either.

It's time to demand that our state and our country provide decent, affordable health coverage.

We should have done it 50 years ago.

In closing, as you go to lobby your legislators this week, demand a healthcare plan this year! Tell them you won't take no for an answer. Then tell them that you also demand justice for injured workers. Workers' comp has to be fixed.

Insurance companies must return the obscene profits they took out of the pockets of injured workers.

It's time for Labor to rise up and assert itself.

Mother Jones said, "Pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living."

When she was quite elderly, she told a friend, "One of the boys said I was look-

ing well. Of course I am. There is going to be a racket and I am going to be in it!"

Now it's up to us to go over to the legislature and make a racket that will reverberate throughout the State!



'Shooting for a Cure' On April 19, the 5th annual "Shoot for a Cure" charity sporting clays shoot for the benefit of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society was held. A record turnout with 190 participants comprising 47 teams attended. California's Lt. Governor John Garamendi was on hand to lend his support for this worthy event. 595's Mike Bloxsom, Mark Stoakes, Dan Chivello, and Jeff Schaeffer attended on behalf of our local. Over \$25,000 was raised in this charity event.

Congratulations! New 595 Family Additions! **Mother Goose was very busy!**

*Jebadiah and Katrina Ross, proud parents of
Jasmine Alina Ross, born March 30, 2007
Michael and Kimberly Dalton, proud parents of
Hailea Joy Dalton, born April 4, 2007
Rueben and Lisa Cazarez, proud parents of
Andrew Max Cazarez, born April 17, 2007*

Condolences to the families and loved ones of our departed members

*James Haryman, age 67, passed on March 5, 2007,
a member for 44 years
Carol Pelz, age 52, passed on March 10, 2007,
a member for 25 years
Roy R Price, age 71, passed on April 17, 2007,
a member for 38 years*