



Local 103
OF GREATER
BOSTON

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

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For immediate release, Monday, February 23, 2009

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Massachusetts Union Is Set To Challenge Big Pharma/Biotech “Fat Cats”

A 7,500-member local of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), AFL-CIO, today served notice on the “Fat Cats” of the pharmaceutical/biotechnology industry that their unethical and sometimes criminal behavior and their easy access to corporate welfare can no longer be tolerated.

Through a partnership with New York-based Corporate Campaign, Inc. (CCI), IBEW, Local 103, is launching a major educational and public outreach campaign to challenge self-serving business interests that drive up the cost of health care, particularly prescription drugs, in Massachusetts and elsewhere.

“Our union is firmly committed to advocating for the public interest while defending our members' interests,” said Local 103 Business Manager Mike Monahan. “These goals are both consistent and complementary.”

“Our attention was initially drawn to companies like Genzyme, Shire, Wyeth, AstraZeneca, EMD Serono and Biogen because they plan to build or are already building new facilities in Massachusetts, using contractors that refuse to hire Massachusetts electricians who earn wages and health benefits consistent with the community,” Monahan explained.

“Of course, we want union workers on these projects because they are graduates of the best apprentice training programs; they earn area-standard wages, benefits and health coverage, and they deliver top-quality, on-time work at job sites that are constantly monitored for safe working conditions,” Monahan added. “But the more we learned about these companies, the more we realized that they have come to expect taxpayers to subsidize them. Tragically, corporate welfare from federal, state and local sources has become a way of life at a time when federal, state, local and household budgets are strained to the limit.”

Monahan goes on to say, “There is simply no excuse for pinching pennies on construction costs while raiding public treasuries in order to steer millions to executives and directors who are already grossly overcompensated. But that's exactly what they're doing.”

“We agree with Harvard Medical School Senior Lecturer Dr. Marcia Angell that drug companies have ‘deceived and exploited the American people’ by becoming ‘primarily a marketing machine to sell drugs of dubious benefit’ that are often the result of taxpayer-funded research,” said CCI director Ray Rogers, a prominent labor strategist for more than three decades. “She correctly points out that they often engage in ‘promotional practices [that] can only be described as bribery and kickbacks.’”

Rogers added, “We have amassed plenty of evidence that consumers of health care, the medical community and taxpayers in general suffer greatly from the way these companies feed at the public trough.” “When you consider the way our tax dollars are being squandered on obsessive profit-takers like Genzyme Corporation's \$35 million-a-year CEO, Henri Termeer, you can't help but feel nauseous.”

CCI and Local 103 will maintain a website www.StopBiotechLooting.org featuring information on price-gouging, ethical conflicts, overprescribing, mislabeling and other corrupt practices. The union will also distribute hundreds of thousands of copies of a 4-page brochure and will mobilize thousands of members and supporters to lobby state and local officials.

“A good example of the problem we are confronting came last year, when Gov. Deval Patrick proposed and the state Legislature approved giving \$1 billion in tax breaks, grants and infrastructure subsidies to biotech firms – just a few months after Patrick appointed Genzyme's Henri Termeer to his Council of Economic Advisers,” said Rogers.

Local 103 was founded in 1900 and has been firmly rooted in Massachusetts towns and cities since its members installed the earliest street lamps and wiring for homes and businesses.

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