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LIUNA Launches “Build Kentucky 2010,” Challenges Sen. McConnell To Put Jobs First

*Campaign Part of National Effort to End Senate Obstruction
of Investment in the Basics of Kentucky and America*

**Initiative Kicks Off With Billboards Warning of Structurally Deficient
Bridges, Support from Congress, Member Mobilization**

Louisville, Ky. (Aug. 12, 2010) – LIUNA – the Laborers’ International Union of North America – joined with a coalition of allies today in kicking off “Build Kentucky 2010,” a comprehensive effort to urge Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell to end the obstruction of investment that would create nearly 300,000 jobs in Kentucky alone and build the critical infrastructure of the state and the nation.

LIUNA members, joined by elected officials, local business leaders, community activists and union officials, launched Build Kentucky underneath a bridge of the John F. Kennedy Memorial Bridge structure – one of 4,426 bridges in the state that are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. Decline and decay of the state and national transportation systems is due in part to the lack in investment through a new federal Surface Transportation Bill.

Billboards warning motorists of structurally deficient bridges, which will soon appear in Kentucky, are a “conversation starter” aimed at raising awareness of the needs facing Kentucky and America and urge people to contact McConnell and tell him to work with Democrats in a bipartisan way to get America’s economy moving again.

“It’s time to put Kentucky first, it’s time to create jobs and it’s time to build Kentucky,” said Larry Tabor, business manager for the Kentucky Laborers’ District Council. “This effort, this message, is aimed squarely at one person who’s in a position to do something. Senator Mitch McConnell has led his party in blocking the investment that would put people to work and build a foundation for Kentucky in the 21st century.”

Kentucky’s problems are part of a broader national crisis that is only getting worse. According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, the taxpayer tab for taking care of the basics of the country soared 69 percent between 2001 and today – from \$1.3 trillion to \$2.2 trillion.

“Every year we delay investing in Kentucky and America means taxpayers are on the hook for another \$150 billion,” Tabor said. “We cannot afford to let these problems get worse.”

Build Kentucky 2010 also includes online advertising and the mobilization of LIUNA members in Kentucky who began their focus on McConnell and build support for key legislation, including the Surface Transportation Bill.

The campaign enjoys support from elected officials, including U.S. Rep. John Yarmuth, D-Ky., and other political leaders, such as Greg Fischer, the Democratic candidate for Louisville mayor.

“Cities and states try to do their part – a patch here, a fix there. But, especially in an economy like this one, the only way we can truly protect these investments, and improve on them, is for our leaders in Washington to step up and address our long-term needs,” Fischer said. “If our leaders are truly committed to addressing these issues, they need to pass a surface transportation bill.”

LIUNA’s efforts have also been endorsed by a broad range of groups, including the Sierra Club, the Associated General Contractors of America, Build America’s Future and Build America’s Schools.

“We need to fight to create jobs that support our families and bring life to our communities,” said Attica Scott, who leads the Louisville chapter of Jobs With Justice. “And we need to tell Mitch McConnell that the time to act is now and the time for standing in the way is over.”

The problems facing Kentucky’s critical infrastructure are many. In addition to deficient bridges:

- 277 of Kentucky’s dams are considered “high-hazard” by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, presenting a risk to life or property.
- More than 600 miles of rivers in Kentucky are polluted, and water treatment facilities have racked up hundreds of violations.
- More than 10 percent of public school facilities are in need of major rehabilitation or replacement.

“A good job doesn’t just put money in our pockets. It also gives us our pride,” said Regina Thompson, a member of LIUNA Local 576 who had had only five weeks of work in the past six months. “That’s why we’re all here today – we’re going to make sure Sen. McConnell hears us: It’s time to put Kentucky first and put people to work.”

For more information about Build Kentucky 2010, visit www.BuildKentucky2010.com. For more information about Build America 2010, visit www.LiunaBuildsAmerica.org.

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The half-million members of LIUNA – the Laborers’ International Union of North America – are on the forefront of the construction industry, a powerhouse of workers who are proud to build America.