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LIUNA Launches “Build Maryland 2010” To Get Marylanders Working Again

*Statewide Campaign Is Key Part of National Effort to Solidify
Support in U.S. Senate for Investment in the Basics of
Maryland and America*

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

Baltimore, Md. (August 3, 2010) – LIUNA – the Laborers’ International Union of North America – joined with a broad coalition of allies today in beginning “Build Maryland 2010,” a comprehensive effort to bring at least 60,000 jobs to Maryland in the next five years by strengthening support in the U.S. Senate for legislation that will put people back to work building the critical infrastructure of the state and the nation.

Over 150 LIUNA members, joined by elected officials, local business leaders, community activists and union officials, launched Build Maryland 2010 within view of the Wilkens Avenue bridge over Gwynns Falls – one of 1,343 bridges in the state that are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. The bridge has been identified by the city for rehabilitation since 2004, yet repairs could still be years away.

Billboards warning motorists of structurally deficient bridges, now appearing in Maryland, are a “conversation starter” aimed at raising awareness of the needs facing Maryland and America and urge people to contact U.S. Senators Barbara Mikulski and Ben Cardin and ask them to champion the cause of creating jobs and getting America’s economy moving again.

“The problems facing Maryland are already too big to ignore. One-fourth of our bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. One-third of our roads are in mediocre or poor condition,” said Jim Anastase, Business Manager of LIUNA Local 710, based in Baltimore. “We have no choice – for the sake of everyone in this state, we need to invest in its basic needs before it’s too late – and Build Maryland 2010 is about making these investments.”

Maryland’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 day we delay investment is another day these problems become larger and more expensive,” said Denny Martire, a LIUNA Vice President and Mid-Atlantic Regional Manager. “Another year of delay means another \$150 billion of taxpayer money will be needed just to remain competitive.”

Build Maryland 2010 also includes online advertising and the mobilization of hundreds of LIUNA members in Maryland who began their outreach to Senators Mikulski and Cardin at the launch event, placing phone calls to both senators’ offices and urging them to champion key legislation, including a comprehensive highway bill, that will create jobs, invest in America and leave a legacy for taxpayers and future generations.

“I am proud to join the Build Maryland 2010 campaign call to action for Congress to make the necessary investments in our nation's infrastructure to enable Maryland to create good jobs in our communities,” said U.S. Rep. Donna Edwards, a Democrat representing the state’s 4th Congressional District.

LIUNA’s campaign in Maryland is part of its national Build America 2010 effort, which has already launched in Colorado, Connecticut and Indiana. It will soon expand to Kentucky, Ohio and other states. It has drawn support from a broad range of groups, including the Sierra Club, the Associated General Contractors of America and Build America’s Schools.

“Building Maryland is also about building our communities,” said Betty Bland Thomas, a community activist and part of the South Baltimore Coalition. “Despite a lack of jobs, people’s spirits remain strong. People in South Baltimore and throughout Maryland not only need work – they want to work and they’re ready to work today.”

Local contractors have also indicated they’re ready to hire more workers, but can’t until Washington invests in job-creating projects.

“We’ve got the capacity to do twice as much work as we’re doing right now, and we’ve had to let go 40 percent of our employees,” said Jim McNelis of the Joseph B. Fay Company. “Things have been this way for us since 2009. We want to bring people back to work, but we need Washington to invest in our highways for that to happen.”

“Every day, I get 10 to 20 calls from people looking for a job and it breaks my heart to have to turn them down,” said Wyatt Watson, president and CEO of Baltimore-based BMW Cleaning Solutions. “We’ve had to hold off growing our business because there’s a lack of work out there.”

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

- One-third of roads are rated by the federal government as being in mediocre or poor condition, including over 1,500 miles of road rated as “poor.”
- Faulty municipal and industrial wastewater facilities are responsible for a significant amount of pollution in the Chesapeake Bay, including 19 percent of nitrogen contamination and 21 percent of phosphorous contamination

- State public schools face a \$1.5 billion maintenance backlog, on top of other construction needs.

“Fixing our roads, bridges, pipes and schools is just common sense,” said Jennie Thompson, a member of LIUNA Local 710 who has been out of work since October. “Not only will it put me and others back to work, but it will also give us work we can be proud of, work that helps our community.”

For more information about Build Indiana 2010, visit www.BuildMaryland2010.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.