

Friday, September 17, 2004

Union sets up database to track job outsourcing

By MATTHEW KELLY

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON -- The AFL-CIO cranked up its campaign to stop the export of U.S. jobs yesterday by launching a new database designed to track companies that outsource jobs overseas.

The union said it hopes American workers will use the information to press elected officials to take steps to discourage job loss.

Richard Trumka, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO, said the new Job Tracker database will help workers know which companies are exporting jobs, "and they can use that information to fight back."

Visitors to the Web site (www.workingamerica.org) are urged to write President Bush and their senators and House members to tell them to stop the export of jobs overseas. To make that task easier, the Web site will fax a pre-written form letter automatically if visitors provide their name and address.

"It's our hope that all workers and the whole public will then flood the White House and flood their congressional representatives with faxes and messages with how upset they are that U.S. companies are shipping jobs abroad," AFL-CIO spokeswoman Sarah Massey said.

Trumka called for the end to tax breaks for U.S. companies doing business abroad, which the union cites as a major incentive for companies to outsource jobs.

The Job Tracker allows users to search by ZIP code or industry sector for companies that have either moved jobs overseas or reported layoffs due to international competition.

For publicly traded companies, the site also provides links to the chief executive's pay. The union said its sources for the listings are all public information, ranging from the Labor Department to newspapers.

According to the AFL-CIO, over 200,000 U.S. companies and subsidiaries have exported jobs or eliminated jobs because of foreign competition since 2001, a figure that the union said is conservative.

Job loss has become an issue in the presidential election, especially in all-important battleground states such as Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan. In the past three years, the United States has lost 2.7 million manufacturing jobs, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"Everybody talks about this amorphous 'jobs are being exported,' " Trumka said, "but until you can put a company name to it, particularly when the company is right across the street from you, it doesn't have the same effect."

Matthew Kelly can be reached at 202-263-6400 or by e-mail at matthew@hearstdc.com