

## WHAT BILL CLINTON HAS DONE FOR WORKING ARKANSANS

### **Working with Labor in Arkansas**

\* In 1983, to help Arkansas deal with changing work force needs and effectively compete in a world economy, Governor Clinton established the Governor's Dislocated Worker Task Force. The Task Force is composed of representatives of the Arkansas AFL-CIO, the Arkansas Employment Security Division, and Arkansas Industrial Development Commission, and the Vocational Technical Education Division. The Task Force identifies plant closings and layoffs as early as possible, responds quickly to develop a plan to serve the specific needs of the workers, and involves the community in the process. Retraining, placement and other supportive services are offered.

Clinton, in 1986, gave a JTPA grant of over \$100,000 to the AFL-CIO to maintain the Dislocated Worker Assistance Center in Jones, Mill, Arkansas, a program which assisted workers dislocated by plant closing or mass layoffs in 4 Arkansas counties.

In 1988, Clinton gave another JTPA grant of \$168,275 to the AFL-CIO to establish a similar Center in Forrest City.

\* In 1988, Governor Clinton and the AFL-CIO worked together closely on petition drives in successful efforts to get two referendums on the Arkansas ballot:

The Arkansas Tax Policy Amendment, called the "Fair Tax Amendment," and

The Code of Ethics Amendment, which is now state law.

\* In 1989, Clinton supported and signed into law an AFL-CIO-initiated bill which set qualifications for the Arkansas Department of Labor director to be a representative of employees in previous employment.

\* Clinton joined forces with the AFL-CIO to limit temporary employee leasing within the state during the 1991 session of the legislature.

\* He joined the AFL-CIO in fighting for a uniform residential landlord tenant law in the recent legislative session.

\* Clinton was the first Arkansas governor to recognize AFSME as the bargaining unit at the Arkansas Department of Labor.

\* Clinton was commended by the State AFL-CIO in 1991 for improving education in Arkansas.

\* He made labor's Right to Know bills an Administration priority in two sessions of the legislature since 1983, and in 1991, a Chemical Right to Know bill which passed the general

assembly recognized the right of public employees to know about hazardous chemicals in the work place.

\* The state's minimum wage was increased from \$3.35 an hour to \$3.65 an hour on July 1, 1991, and it will increase to \$4.00 an hour in July, 1992.

\* \$1 million dollars was earmarked, in 1991, for Arkansas's Workplace Literacy Programs. Since July, 1, 1991, \$593,919 has been allocated for work place basic skills classes in 142 industries.

In addition, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock's Labor Education Program has received a state grant of \$100,000 to run work place literacy programs in industries across the state whose employees belong to organized labor unions.

\* Governor Clinton recently signed a petition urging Congress to pass the Workplace Fairness bill and has spoken strongly in favor of the need to extend unemployment benefits to unemployed workers.

### **Apprenticeships**

A new program of Youth Apprenticeships was approved by the 1991 General Assembly to develop, with specific employers, youth apprenticeship\work-based programs and to enhance the existing traditional apprenticeship programs in order to provide motivation for non-college bound students to stay in school and do well.

\$3 million was appropriated for the next two years for these programs. To allow for the changes associated with apprenticeship training and educational reform, business, industry and organized labor were involved in drafting and providing support for the legislation and the development of the rules and regulations of the programs.

### **Tech Prep**

The 1991 legislature and Governor Clinton provided for a high school level Tech Prep Certification for non-college bound youth which blends academic and vocational instruction through the integration of applied academics. The Certification will signal academic and technical competency for students completing the curriculum and will help guarantee more educational options with good economic prospects for high school students.

### **New Programs for Working Men and Women in Arkansas**

Governor Clinton and the 1991 legislature provided many new opportunities for working families:

\* Arkansas Better Chance program provides funding for more preschool programs in Arkansas and for expansion of existing

programs such as Head Start and HIPPIY (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters.) These programs are available to families with young children whose parents did not finish high school; children of teen parents; and children whose families meet certain income guidelines. For example, a family of four qualifies if their income is not more than \$18,460 a year.

\* The Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship program will benefit not just poor families, but middle-income working families, too. Scholarships of \$1,000 per year (or tuition cost, whichever is lower) will be given to any student who takes the core curriculum in high school, achieves a 2.5 grade point average in those courses, scores a 19 on the ACT, stays off drugs, enrolls in an Arkansas college and has a family income of \$30,000 or less for families with one child and \$35,000 for those with two children. The 1991 law allows an extra \$5,000 of family income per child.

### **Leading the Region in Job Growth**

In the last half of the 1980s, Arkansas' percentage of total employment and manufacturing job growth outstripped that of all surrounding states and the United States.

Between 1985 and 1989, while the percentage of manufacturing jobs in the nation grew by only 0.9 percent, Arkansas experienced an increase of 10.2 percent. During the same period, Arkansas ranked 10th in the nation in manufacturing job growth and 22nd in total employment growth.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Arkansas ranked 9th in the nation in wage and salary growth from 1988 to 1990 with a percentage growth of 6.9 percent compared to the national average of 4.5 percent.

Arkansas ranked 5th in the nation in wage and salary growth between July, 1990, and July, 1991, according to the Bureau. Arkansas' increase was 2.7 percent compared to a national decline of -1.3 percent.

The Economic Outlook Center of Arizona State University ranked Arkansas 7th in the nation in job growth this year with a 2.87 percent increase compared to a .7 percent national decline.

### **Reducing Unemployment**

Arkansas' unemployment rate declined from 11.6 percent when Governor Clinton took office in January, 1983, to a 10-year low of 5.5 percent in October, 1989. The rate in August, 1991, was 7.3 percent, about one percent above the national average.

### **Tax Reform**

In 1991, Governor Clinton and the General Assembly eliminated state income taxes for about 252,000 low-income Arkansans and reduced state income taxes for another 122,000 lower-middle income people. This reduction in state taxes offsets the 1/2 cent sales tax increase for those lower income Arkansas citizens.