



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on November 18, 2011

## Big Labor Supports “Occupy” Movement

On November 15, demonstrators from Occupy D.C. were removed from the Victor Building in Washington, but the *Washington Times* reports that big labor unions have provided accommodations to that group.

The [Service Employees International Union](#) has given Occupy D.C. portable toilets. The AFL-CIO headquarters has a gym with showers, and as Jeff Hauser of that union says: “We happen to have a few showers associated with our small gym.... We make those available. It happened kind of naturally. We’ve talked with them about the needs they’ve expressed. This really helps them and it’s not a heavy lift on our part.

“The rise of inequality, the job crisis — we’re thankful their creative energy and persistence has helped elevate these critical issues. We want to be supportive.”

The National Nurses Union, the biggest union of professional nurses, has also set up a first-aid station supplied with voluntary nurses and medical supplies. Donna Smith of that union said: “It’s the basic things, little things for people who are outdoors for a period of time. And it’s good to have that kind of interaction.” The Occupy D.C. groups have more infrastructure than other such groups. As examples, it has its own library, its own media center, and its own newspapers.

The Occupy Wall Street movement in New York has been heavily sprinkled with labor union members. Hats, shirts, and placards from many unions appear in the crowds that are protesting. Florence Williams Johnson with the Service Employees International Union said: “Let us not forget that this is not just a union fight,” adding that the people present were indebted to Occupy Wall Street for show (sic) us the way. All of us are united, not separated by words that they have used to divide us for too long.”

The [list of big labor unions](#) officially supporting Occupy Wall Street is long and growing. It includes the National Transit Union, United Steelworkers of America, Amalgamated Transit Union, United Federation of Teachers, National Nurses United, Communication Workers of America, Operational Weather Squadron, New York Transit Union, United Pilots Union, Teamsters Union, and leading members of the AFL-CIO.

This support is international as well. Sharon Burrow of the [International Trade Unions Confederation](#) recently said: “From New York to London and Toronto to Frankfurt, in hundreds of cities in dozens of countries, the movement has grown and continues to develop strength. Even as tents are taken down and people moved, nobody can stop what has been started. Big banks have pulled the plug on the real economy, and some of the biggest companies are only too ready to profit from the economic crisis. Like T-Mobile USA, whose employees live in fear of company intimidation simply because they want union representation. The Occupy movement all over the world is a public demonstration of support for the





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dignity of work and the need to promote social justice. We stand with the movement to defend the right to peaceful assembly without interference, and against the massive and growing inequality created by Wall Street and its global financial allies. We proudly add our voices to speak out against pervasive inequality.”

How can those who profess to oppose big concentrations of power be supported so strongly by conglomerations of big labor? It is a question that the media and political science professors are probably not going to ask.

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