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Union SAFE Benefits Assist Union Members Hard Hit By Economic Crisis

*Help with job loss, unreimbursed hospital bills and saving for college
among benefits for Union Plus program participants*

WASHINGTON – With many working families in financial distress as a result of the sharp downturn in the U.S. economy, Union Plus offers hardship benefits to assist eligible union members facing financial difficulties.

The benefits program, called Union SAFE – for Security, Assistance and Financial Education – provides a wide array of benefits, including help for those suffering from layoffs to soaring hospital costs to problems paying their mortgage to help saving for college.

Unique benefits being offered under the Union SAFE initiative to help eligible members include:

- Free credit counseling services, budgeting advice and no-fee debt management and bankruptcy counseling benefits.
- Hospital Care Grants of \$1,000 to help members who have been hit with large, unreimbursed hospital expenses who participate in the Union Plus Credit Card, Mortgage or Insurance programs.
- Job Loss Grants of \$250 for Union Plus Credit Card holders who have been recently laid off for more than 90 days.
- Mortgage Assistance to help Union Plus Mortgage holders, who become unemployed, disabled or go on strike, make their mortgage payments.

And, to help members finance their children's college educations, Union SAFE offers a College Savings Grant of \$500 to union members or retirees who open new 529 tax-free college savings accounts or pre-paid tuition accounts of at least \$1,000.

This \$3 million initiative offered by Union Plus to eligible union members demonstrates that the labor movement is answering President Obama's call for a new era of responsibility to help those who have fallen on hard times, says Leslie Tolf, president of Union Privilege, provider of the Union Plus benefits.

"We are all hopeful today because President Obama is working to help middle-class Americans struggling in this worsening recession," Tolf says. "America's unions and Union Plus are doing what we can right now to assist members in trouble – especially those who participate in a Union Plus program."

In addition, the Union SAFE initiative expands and increases other Union Plus benefits, such as:

- Increasing the number of Union Plus Credit Card Disability Grants (which range from \$1,000 to \$2,000) available to cardholders who have experienced a significant loss of income within the past six months due to a recent disability that has kept them out of work for 90 days.
- Expanding the availability of \$500 Disaster Relief Grants to participants in the Union Plus Credit Card, Mortgage and Insurance programs.

“The new Union SAFE benefits expand the Union Plus Safety Net to help and support union members and make the union-backed Union Plus benefits an even better value,” Tolf says.

More information and grant applications are available at **UnionPlus.org/UnionSAFE**

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Union Privilege, founded by the AFL-CIO in 1986, develops and manages the Union Plus benefits program, which uses the combined buying power of America’s union members to obtain top quality goods and services at competitive prices. In addition to a money-saving credit card, the Union Plus programs include free and discounted legal services, education services, discounted health services, a home buying program, travel and recreation discounts, and much more. For more information, visit **www.UnionPlus.org**.

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