



→ [NEWSPAPER SEARCH](#)

→ [FIND A BUSINESS](#)

The Republican.

[More From The Republican](#) | [Subscribe To The Republican](#)

Labor unions picket at Friendly's

Saturday, January 28, 2006

By **MARY ELLEN LOWNEY**
mlooney@repub.com

WILBRAHAM - Western Massachusetts labor leaders and supporters staged a protest yesterday morning at a non-union shop, Friendly Ice Cream Corp., for cutting health care benefits to employees at 129 area restaurants.

Earlier in the day, the protest got an unexpected boost from state Attorney General Thomas F. Reilly, a Democrat making a bid for the governor's seat this fall.

The late morning rally by the Pioneer Valley AFL-CIO, held at Friendly's headquarters at 1855 Boston Road, was complete with chants, speeches and a visit by an unnamed company official who threatened to call police if the 50 men and women failed to leave the property.

"Friendly's has been very unfriendly to its employees," said Richard Brown, president of the umbrella labor group that represents 72 labor unions with 35,000 workers and their families across the region.

Reilly, in Ludlow attending the AFL-CIO's annual legislative breakfast at Tony and Penny's Restaurant, said he is disappointed that Friendly's would cut benefits to employees, many of them already at the low end of the wage scale.

"I find it extremely disquieting," Reilly said after his formal address to the crowd of 175 in the restaurant.

"Friendly's for so long was focused on their workers. It's very disappointing to see them cut back like this. It's an unfortunate sign," Reilly said.

Friendly's made the cuts in October, but did not announce them until this week, after the publication of a Boston Globe article.

The workers went from a comprehensive plan where they paid part of the premiums to a plan where premiums dropped in price, but coverage was scaled back. Company officials referred to the plan, offered by Star HRG of Arizona, as "a sickness and accident plan."

Yesterday, the company official, who refused to identify himself, also declined comment.

INSIDE

News

- » [Columnists](#)
- » [Death Notices](#)
- » [Editorials](#)
- » [Features](#)
- » [Letter to the Editor](#)
- » [NewsFlash](#)
- » [Photo Galleries](#)
- » [The Republican](#)
- » [Top Stories](#)
- » [Weather Center](#)
- » [Weblogs](#)

Site Tools

- [E-mail This](#)
- [Print This](#)
- [Search Site](#)
- [Newsletters](#)

Speak Up!

- [Talk Springfield](#)

Plus Papers

- [Metro South Plus](#)
- [Neighborhoods](#)

Local Weblogs

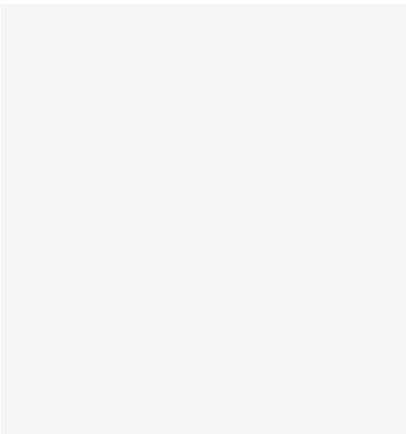
- [Urban Compass](#)

- » [Enter for your chance to win a Fragrance of the Month gift from Yankee Candle.](#)
- » [Local Buzz Good Stuff Giveaway Contest.](#)


FROM OUR ADVERTISERS

>>
>>

• [Advertise With Us](#)



 Print This

 E-mail This

MORE SPRINGFIELD NEWS

- [2 men plead innocent to slaying](#)
- [Center hosts home show exhibits](#)
- [Fugitive captured in New York City](#)
- [More Stories](#)

© 2006 The Republican. Used by MassLive.com with permission.

The Best Local Classifieds: [Jobs](#) | [Autos](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Place An Ad](#)



Trial offer: 4 weeks free!
[Subscribe Now!](#)

[About Us](#) | [Help/Feedback](#) | [Advertise With Us](#)

Use of this site constitutes acceptance of our [User Agreement](#). Please read our [Privacy Policy](#).

©2006 [MassLive.com](#). All Rights Reserved.



Home	News+Biz	Local	Sports	Forums	Cams+Radio	Living	Entertainment	CLASSIFIEDS
----------------------	--------------------------	-----------------------	------------------------	------------------------	----------------------------	------------------------	-------------------------------	--------------------

Get The Best Local...
[Jobs](#) | [Autos](#) | [Real Estate](#)
[All Classifieds](#) | [Place An Ad](#)