

The dream of immigration reform filled the Milwaukee labor



council parking lot as speakers told the crowd and gathered media how businesses used bad immigration laws to avoid paying workers. They cheered Voces de La Frontera bus riders heading to D.C. for a national rally and prepared to march anew to support the dream, which is now gaining bipartisan support in Congress. Voces will lead a big rally May 1 through Downtown Milwaukee. Change will be a tough haul since Obama's "unwavering support" may not mean "immediate action," but pressure is a big part of change.



Sheila Cochran helps surprise Lt. Gov. Barbara Lawton at YWCA working women's tribute. See Page 3.

DON'T MASK CREATIVITY! - Unions asked to brainstorm for pageant and Laborfest. Page 4



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## Tax hell?

### Facts chill that state myth

By Dominique Paul Noth  
Editor, Labor Press

No one likes taxes, even when they pay for quality of life. Everyone hates not only the April 15 deadline but particularly the anxiety-inducing end-of year property tax bill.

But no one should like being lied to either -- and a conflagration of tax studies from left and right this month exposed how deeply Wisconsin citizens have been duped and bamboozled, or simply lied to, by those demeaning the state as a tax hell.

These new studies and analyses emerge from diverse quarters often guilty over the years of promoting that tax hell mythology, and maybe now quietly apologizing for the failure.

Conservative think tanks (however reluctantly), the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, anti-tax crusaders and the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel are among those forced to finally admit a better understanding of the tax picture.

All in different reports (that disagree only around the edges) confirmed that the Wisconsin tax burden is the lowest it's been in more than 45 years and that the actual cost of government per income seems to put us in the lower rung of all 50 states.

"I'd love to see taxes go down" even further, Democrat Tom Barrett commented in a recent debate among candidates for Wisconsin governor, but neither of his GOP opponents who were part of that tax hell game,

Scott Walker and Mark Neumann, dared refute his main point: "I think as a percent of Wisconsin income, the tax burden is the smallest since 1961."

Trick the figures all you will -- and believe me, those seeking to get into office by any hook will -- when you finally employ a fair count that includes fees as well as state and local taxes, Wisconsin drops to the middle of all states. Leave fees aside -- and we still drop to about 14th in state income and property tax despite the realities that we are a rust belt state, services cost more, road building and other concerns must deal with bad weather. And Wisconsin has been under both Democrats and Republicans amazingly easy on businesses in its corporate tax climate.

The bad news - the state's tax continues to fall too heavily on middle class and poor families. But remember, the tax hell argument was pushed by business groups that today's analyses reveal have been allowed to duck paying their fair share. Both Republican and Democratic administrations have bent over backwards to create a friendly state tax atmosphere for them. (Too friendly, it now becomes clear.)

In such fees as road tolls and in sales taxes, Wisconsin actually emerges as far easier on its citizens than many other states - in fact some pundits accuse us of subsidizing Illinois tourists. Our

Taxes continued Page 12

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## Home run for Moore

You probably hadn't heard of the big crowd in our photos, happy for health reform as it greeted Rep. Gwen Moore. Few also know from the media about the many such scenes often spontaneous around the country for other elected officials arriving home after surviving that D.C. insult and endurance test.

They were the majority in everything, it seems, except press coverage in supporting, at long last and with many hard compromises, the reform of health insurance President Obama had pushed as his first big legislative project.

The Milwaukee outpouring contrasts with recent headlines that sought controversy by continuing the opposition to the health care legislation, which Moore was the first to tell the crowd was a remarkable step forward but ONLY the first of several steps needed for universal health care for families, children, seniors, the whole range of people whose stories helped create the legislation.

## Union veterans sought for parade

Union veterans will march as a unit Monday, May 31, in the Memorial Day Parade, with a start time of 2 p.m. at 4th St. and Wisconsin Ave. The parade proceeds west to the War Memorial Center and the laying of a wreath there at 3:30 p.m. with further activities concluding at Veteran Park at the lakefront.

The Union Vets Committee has arranged participation in this, the 145th consecutive Memorial Day Parade. There are other ceremonies, get-togethers and tributes surrounding this holiday, including motorcycle rides. The Union Vets Committee believes it is high time to recognize how many union members have also served as veterans of the Armed Forces. Participants are urged to wear the colors of the service they were part of. Staging will take place at Zeidler Union Square Park, between 3rd and 4th at Michigan St. Downtown.

For more information on the event and the Union Vets Committee, contact Mike Balistriere, mikeaflcio@sbcglobal.net or (414) 771-9829.



It was an enthusiastic but admittedly noisy crowd on a late Friday night that greeted Gwen Moore at Mitchell Field, including a health care cow, the family of unionist Stephanie Bloomingdale and even Milwaukee Democratic Party Chairman Sachin Chheda. More than 100 quickly gathered at Concourse D by email to thank her for being their champion in health care legislation. The visibly surprised congresswoman (below) walked alone into the fray to deliver hugs, and her own thanks and happiness.



ward but ONLY the first of several steps needed for universal health care for families, children, seniors, the whole range of people whose stories helped create the legislation.

Now the country is engaged in a foot race. It is a race of actual gains against fear and doubt for the hearts and minds of voters.

The legislation helps many immediately and will aid many more over the next few years - that is, after the fall votes are counted.

Guess who's counting on the delay before the deficit goes down because of the health bill, before jobs come back because of coverage families can afford. Real progress, while immediate for millions, can't keep pace with blather and exaggeration.

Selectively anyone can find

Health continued Page 14



## Taking the mystery out of green jobs

In a brisk slideshow that drew the rapt attention of March delegates to the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, Sue Browne of the BlueGreen Alliance took a lot of the fears out of "green technology," pointing out that much of it required abilities union workers already had or could take a natural step up in training for.

The traumatizing headlines made by weatherization and stimulus disappointments are largely from failure to envision the field as the Blue-Green and the state AFL-CIO do -- requiring family supporting jobs and dedicated skills in fixing up, retrofitting and working for more efficient energy. Browne emphasized how BlueGreen was a coalition of agreement on certain issues among business, environmentalists and labor, the USW and the Laborers notable among them.

Browne, a two decade



USW veteran, is Michigan and Wisconsin Regional Program Manager for the Labor Climate Project and has tons more information and flyers to share at [sueb@bluegreenalliance.org](mailto:sueb@bluegreenalliance.org). But BlueGreen is hardly alone in seeking a new industry of good jobs and better costs through green. The MATC has special programs,; a new coalition, Emerald Cities, is emerging and many of the bills in Madison focus on green technology, including one to set green building standards for all public buildings in Wisconsin

## An everyday story with persistent payoff

By Don Burmester

Special to Labor Press

**per-sis-tent** -- adjective 1 : existing for a long or longer than usual time or continuously; retained beyond the usual period (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>)

Somewhere there may be a dictionary with a picture of Andrew Davis illustrating the definition of persistent.

Andrew, a HIRE Center participant, has proved that even in a distressed economy, persistence and perseverance does pay off, especially when against all odds it lands a new job.

Andrew's job search odyssey began a few years ago with his layoff from a Bay View area firm that made computer-related accessory products. With a combined background of work in plating and metal finishing, as well as past employment in the electronics industry in the Chicago area, Andrew thought that job was a terrific blend of his past skills and work experience. Unfortunately, the job ended when he was laid off.

Upon entry into the Dislocated Worker Program at the HIRE Center in early 2007, Andrew hoped to build upon that background by training to set up and operate CNC machines. First, he would need to build up



Andrew Davis can now even get overtime work.

his basic skills in math in preparation for CNC training. With a referral from his case manager, he entered into the MATC Learning Lab at the HIRE Center. He already had some experience courtesy of the computer controls on the plating lines he had operated and the stock databases he had searched during his employment.

Andrew also hoped to work on getting his driver's license so that he could search for work in a broader area. He had the backing of his wife, still working at Andrew's same past employer. Then she, too, was laid off.

That brings up **Part b** of the persistent definition: *continuing without change in function or structure...*

With both he and his wife out of work, the priority for both was to find employment, any employment, to help sustain the family. Andrew worked with his case manager and tuned up his resume, attended the HIRE Center's Job Seeking Skills Workshop, and attended the HIRE Center's weekly Job Club. And he searched and searched for work.

Finally, he did get a full time position as an assistant at an area restaurant. It wasn't the job that

he had hoped to land, but it was full time, it offered some room for advancement, it reflected Andrew's home cooking skills, and brought some income into the family.

Unfortunately by fall 2009, Andrew found himself back out on job search yet again, as the poor economy ate into the restaurant's business.

Undeterred, Andrew returned to the HIRE Center to take advantage of follow-up services including updating his resume and looking for job leads in the HIRE Center Resource Room. When he learned about a potential opening in Oak Creek in the area of 6th & Rawson, he asked about directions, how to take Milwaukee transit to the site, and whether there were any more leads in that area.

Andrew credits the encouragement to investigate other businesses in the industrial park as a key to finding his new job: Without the encouragement not to give up, "I never would have thought about looking at other jobs in that area," he recalled.

Andrew proved that the job-seeking skills preparation and willingness to walk the extra mile does pay off. In his case, it has paid off with a position at an Oak Creek sportswear firm as a screen-printer of college athletic T-shirts and gear. The job is close to a bus route and will provide full health benefits after 60 days of probation.

The HIRE Center -- 816 W. National Ave., 2nd Floor, central phone (414)385-6920 -- provided the assistance and training, but it was Andrew's sheer persistence that made the ultimate difference.

*The author works for and writes about the HIRE Center.*

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Lawton grabs Rep. Moore's hand affectionately while also greeting an admirer. She was nodding in agreement when Legacy VP Margaret Henningsen (left) suggested that more women at community banks would treat workers more fairly. Then she enjoyed a tribute to the occasion (below) provided via video by First Lady Michelle Obama



## Lawton can't dodge 9to5 tribute

Wisconsin's Lt. Gov. Barbara Lawton conceded that she was duped and misled April 8 -- for the noblest of reasons, that is. Lured to the YWCA on Martin Luther King Drive for what she thought was a discussion of working women's issue, she found a packed room of more than a hundred guests to celebrate her accomplishments and leadership.

Organized by the YWCA and 9to5, the organization for working women, the event was conceived as a nationwide tribute but in Milwaukee quietly was framed for something Lawton would otherwise have ducked -- lavish praise of her independence, commitment in public office above personal interest and her ability to work with GOP leaders and businesses around the county despite her proven gift to lance conservative hypocrisy.

Lawton said she was flattered to be surrounded by so many "familiar and influential faces" including Rep. Gwen Moore, MALC leader Sheila Cochran, state Rep. Barbara Toles, noted banker Margaret Henningsen and 9to5 founder Ellen Bravo.

Refusing to be deflected from her larger themes, or her spontaneous wit, she refashioned

her prepared speech and emphasized the gaps that still remain, particularly in such areas as equal pay with men for work, paid time off, lack of child care at work, how reproductive rights were the first give-aways in negotiations for health care and how -- while women have for decades made up half the graduates of law schools -- they are partners in only 12% of the state's law firms.

Lawton's fever for her causes should not disguise her other strengths, such as working with all sides, her intellectual gifts in

solving business issues and persuasive maneuverer around semantics to get bipartisan agreements. It is a combination of skills that her friends have long admired but often pass unnoticed even within her own party.

The surprises continued as the event closed with a special video tribute to the national occasion of honoring working women from First Lady Michelle Obama. Caught in mid-stride about to leave for another event, Lawton stopped to bask in the video tribute -- something else she hadn't expected.

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# People's pageant seeking union brainpower

Last year's 2009 Labor Day Parade and Laborfest was the scene of an unusual addition: the All-City People's Parade, with non-mechanized floats, giant puppets and masked creatures, created by more than 40 artists working with hundreds of children, youth and families from all over Milwaukee.

The All-City People's Parade has been invited to join the Milwaukee Area Labor Council's Labor Day Parade and Laborfest again on Labor Day, 2010. This year the parade organizers, artists from Milwaukee Public Theatre and the Milwaukee Mask and Puppet Theatre, extend an open invitation to unions and labor families to participate in preparation and presentation in whatever way they can.

More than that, director Barbara Leigh wants your ideas. There are opportunities this spring to host and/or attend a 90-minute community brainstorming session. This will be a great opportunity to express your ideas, and help to form an exciting, creative public art "story" of, by and for our community. This year will have a new theme, to be determined in several public meetings throughout Milwaukee; and like last year it will feature all new giant puppets, masked creatures, floats, etc. to be built and presented to the community by the community.

Brainstorm session hosts are asked to provide a quiet, comfortable meeting space and we hope 25 or more people will attend the meeting by invitation. MPT/MMPT will provide promotional flyers, a brief presentation/DVD to illustrate what the parade is about and facilitators who will lead participants in brainstorming on the questions: "What are you most concerned about?" and "What gives you hope?" in your personal life, your neighborhood, community, the world.

Sessions are already scheduled -- Monday, May 10th, 7-9 p.m. at the Riverside Park Urban Ecology Center, 1500

Last year's Laborfest was marked by skits, songs, signs and a pageant (below in front of the Miller Stage) stemming from the All-City People's Parade and Pageant. Unions are being urged to contribute ideas for how the Public Theatre will participate in the 2010 Laborfest.



E. Park Place, and Thursday, May 11, 4:45 p.m., City Hall Rotunda, 200 E. Wells. More such think sessions are being sought, sponsored at union halls or at Laborfest planning meetings, since this year the people's parade and presentation hope for ground-up input from the labor community itself.

Once themes are decided there will be additional opportunities for adults and families throughout July and August to attend Free-to-the-Public Community Workshops facilitated by artists to construct various parade elements with mostly recycled materials. And of course, everyone is invited to be part of the Labor Day All-City People's Parade and Laborfest by wearing a mask, carrying a puppet, playing an instrument, dancing, or pushing/pulling a float.

The following community organizations have assured support in various ways: the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, AFL-CIO, Boys and Girls Clubs, UNCOM Agencies, Artists Working in Education (AWE), MIAD, MPS, VSA Arts Wisconsin, MARN, UWM, Urban Ecology Center, Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful, Milwaukee County Parks, Milwaukee County Office for Persons With Disabilities, LAND, LISC, Summer of Peace and Stand-together Milwaukee.

The project is partly funded by the Helen Bader Foundation, the Elizabeth Brinn Foundation, the Faye McBeath Foundation, the Gardner Family Foundation, the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, Abert Fund, Milwaukee County CAMPAC, the United Performing Arts Fund, the Wisconsin Arts Board and the National Endowment for the Arts.

For more information, including participating in the brainstorm sessions, contact Milwaukee Public Theatre at 414-347-1685 or email [mptheatre2@gmail.com](mailto:mptheatre2@gmail.com) or [barbara@milwaukeeelabor.org](mailto:barbara@milwaukeeelabor.org)

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# Profits over safety rain death on coal miners

By **Dominique Paul Noth**  
Editor, Labor Press

As the death toll rose to 29 in West Virginia's coal mining disaster, the worst in decades, as the community buried its dead, evidence also mounted that much of this human tragedy could have been avoided in this always dangerous profession. The drive for corporate profits at this mining company revealed practices throughout the industry that led to these deaths and now has spurred in-depth investigations.

Cynicism circles the new attention. Many union members and West Virginia families fear the result will be a flurry of emotional concern followed by the same entrenched preference for profits over people's survival, because that is what happened after past disasters.

The Obama administration will be under the gun to prove a difference this time.

It has already brought managerial improvements and new investigative attention to the mining industry but even Obama's secretary of labor, Hilda Solis, lamented in interviews that the federal laws and fines are not tough enough and the nation still needed to develop better rules and work on long delayed congressional action to rein in the lingering behavior of private companies.

The private push for profits combined with strong lobbying by the mining industry and weaknesses in federal law have short-circuited mining improvements. Until existing technology is employed for worker safety and takes precedence over the bottom line, the deaths and injuries will continue and perhaps increase, experts say.

The bulk of evidence makes that judgment unavoidable, not political.

The non-union Upper Big Branch mine, where the accident occurred, has led the nation in the dangerous levels of methane gas (which many attribute to causing the explosion and certainly prevented rescue operations for days until the mine could be ventilated).

## Official Notice

United Steelworkers Local 2-232 is notifying members that an election will be held during the 9:30 a.m. Sunday membership meeting May 16 at Frank Monreal's El Matador, 9155 W. Bluemound Rd. The election fills the position of Briggs & Stratton bargaining committee member, open because of the election of Dean Wegner to be grievance representative.

Ralph E. Schwieger,  
Financial Secretary Treasurer



Labor Secretary Hilda Solis is calling on Congress for tougher mine safety rules.

The mine had been fined more than \$382,000 in the past year for repeated serious violations involving its ventilation plan and equipment, yet little improvement had occurred and the number of violations indicated that it was easier for the company to pay up than to change for the better.

In the last 22 years, Massey Energy Co., which owns the Upper Big Branch mine, has committed over 1,000 serious health and safety violations. Last year alone, noted AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, a former mine worker himself, "Massey Mine, and its CEO, Don Blankenship, have been cited for over 450 safety violations in this mine. Massey paid over \$1 million in fines in the past year alone - and has failed to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars more in fines that it is contesting." Those fines and many more were imposed even during the Bush administration but Massey was allowed to skate.

Former mining companies CEOs were regularly put in charge of mine safety bureaucra-

cy from 2000 to 2006, a procedure detailed in a companion Workers Memorial Day article at milwaukeealabor.org.

Last year, in a rally against the Obama government efforts to better regulation, Blankenship attacked the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) and said efforts to ensure miner safety were "as silly as global warming."

Noted Trumka: "This incident isn't just a matter of happenstance, but rather the inevitable result of a profit-driven system and reckless corporate conduct. Many mining companies have given too little attention to safety over the years and too much to the bottom line."

Investigations support Trumka indictment.

The disaster is likely to bring new focus on legislation backed by Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.), to strengthen mine safety laws, which were long dormant but updated in some measure in 2006.



Richard Trumka

In a case of irony or chutzpah, the mining industry opposes Miller's proposal saying it might delay the \$1 billion in improvements it agreed to after that 2006 Sage mining tragedy. What the mining industry ads fail to reveal is that those Sago safety reforms were focused almost exclusively on sustaining trapped miners long enough to rescue them, not on preventing underground explosions - and only occurred because of human tragedy and congressional pressure.

Kentucky lawyer and safety advocate Tony Oppgard told the Associated Press that the federal

safety agency needs to push Congress to mandate six inspections of underground mines each year, rather than four. Other preventive measures offered include requiring coal companies to pump out the methane gas before mining a coal deposit, which many feel would have averted the most recent disaster, and conducting more accurate testing to determine the flammability of conveyer belts and other mine equipment - the most common causes of mine fires.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health discovered that modern mining equipment spits out more coal dust, which can intensify a small explosion into a deadly blast.

Yet without regulatory teeth from Congress, OSHA and other investigators can only recommend to the industry, not insist. The ball is now in Congress' court, though the tragedies could continue in the mines themselves unless Congress is goaded to act.



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# Shock lingers over Morgan's death

Milwaukeeans were just getting to know Tom Morgan as a savvy union negotiator when tragedy struck his personal family and his family of co-workers at the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association.

Morgan hired in July of 2007 as the union's executive director to replace the retiring Sam Carmen, was vacationing with his family on a Caribbean cruise and participating in entertainment activities when he was felled onstage by a heart attack. He was taken to a hospital in Costa Rica where he died March 21. He was 62.

Morgan had actually worked in Milwaukee public schools as a teacher in the late 1960s before moving to Rockford to continue to teach -- and then he got interested in union activities and proved quite good in that role. So good, in fact, that he was chosen as executive director of the Rockford Education Association, which he led for 18 years. His credentials as leader and negotiator brought him back to Milwaukee's MTEA, where he quickly helped settle a stalled teacher's contract at the Milwaukee Public Schools.

By all accounts, Morgan in his quiet determined way walked into a maelstrom of change at MPS -- attempts at mayoral takeover, more fights over the

## In Memoriam



MTEA's Tom Morgan

union's role in public education, more crisis in state funding, expanding the size of the classroom and reducing the number of teachers in the schools, not to mention issues of special education needs and the cost to the MPS system of paying for the voucher school program.

Through all these storms, Morgan was noted for maintaining cordiality and encouraging cooperation while hanging tough on union rights. Co-workers spoke again and again about this special combination of political

skills and dedication to children. The Labor Press ran into him again and again as school events and information sessions he attended on his own.

Still, there is a heavy workload of details and meetings attached to this job -- and a requirement to develop rapport with MPS leaders and an established MTEA team, including a union president, Mike Langyel, who returned to leadership during Morgan's tenure. Morgan did that well and tirelessly.

"After two years, he was just coming into his own as a force," lamented a leader of another union that worked closely with MTEA.

He is survived by his wife, Jackie, and two grown children, Christopher and William, along with five grandchildren. Cards of sympathy for the family are being accepted at the MTEA office, 5130 W. Vliet St., Milwaukee 53208, and the union scheduled its own tribute at its April 21st assembly.

Veteran staff member Pat O'Mahar is serving as interim director while the MTEA conducts a national search (application deadline April 30) to fill the vacancy.

# Calendar

For updated master list of events, visit [www.milwaukeeelabor.org](http://www.milwaukeeelabor.org)

## Wednesday, April 28

**Workers Memorial Day Ceremonies**  
5 p.m. Zeidler Union Square Park

## Friday, April 30

**Fish Fry Benefit for APRI**  
5:30 p.m., Laborers Local 113 Union Hall  
\$15 dine-in, \$10 carryout

## Sunday, May 2

**Bay View Tragedy**  
3 pm., speaker David Newby of state AFL-CIO  
E. Russell Ave. and Superior St.

## Wednesday, May 5

**Monthly Delegate Meeting**  
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

## Thursday, May 6

**Workers Community Resources Fair**  
4-7 p.m., Brewery Workers (UAW) Local 9 Hall,  
9618 W. Greenfield. Ave.  
Confidential advice, light refreshments

## Friday, May 7

**"One Man's Trash Is Another Man's Treasure"**  
Special recycle play from Milwaukee Public Theatre  
7 p.m., Lincoln Center of the Arts, 820 E. Knapp St.  
Tickets \$5 children, seniors, \$10 others

## Wednesday, May 26

**MALC Executive Council**  
2 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

## Wednesday, June 2

**Monthly Delegate Meeting**  
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

## Saturday, June 5

**First MALC Fund-Raiser**  
Keynote Gwen Moore, Emcee Eric Von  
5 p.m., registration, dinner, awards, festivities  
Crystal Ballroom, Hilton City Center, 509 W. Wisconsin

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# Nichols on how Socialism enabled Tea Party

Invited by mentor Frank Zeidler, then titular head of America's Socialist Party, to address the group's annual picnic, the young journalist was deeply honored,-- even though the picnic turned out to be about 12 people.

"It's a bigger crowd than usual this year," Zeidler told John Nichols, "so you'd better use the microphone."

"Frank, I've got a big voice," Nichols recalled, as he regaled the crowd at Centennial Hall with some tongue-in-cheek memories. But Zeidler insisted on dragging out the traditional Socialist Party mike, which explained a lot to Nichols about the faded modern fortunes of the party. It looked like antiquated giant box.

"I think Norman Thomas used this," Zeidler told Nichols, referring to the 1930s Socialist commentator. "No," Nichols retorted, "more like Eugene Debs," invoking the turn of the century union leader.

For the audience gathered for his free lecture at the Milwaukee Public Library Centennial Hall, Nichols used these tales not just for humor but to defuse the current hysteria over what Nichols called "the S Word, the one that has social and ism in it." That ism and even Zeidler (whose casual talks influenced hundreds of young people before his death a few years ago) may well be the topic of Nichols' next book, since debunking the myth of an all-powerful political movement seems long overdue.

Nichols is now nationally known as author or co-author of provocative books on current issues (the latest being "Death and Life of American Journalism"), as columnist for the Nation, as radio and TV commentator and guest, and as

progressive voice for independent journalism.

He grew up in Union Grove -- under the "shadows of socialism" and the nearby "totalitarianism schemes" of Milwaukee Mayor Zeidler, a description that evoked gales of laughter from the audience attending the not so coincidentally named annual Zeidler lecture, dedicated to the public service of the late mayor who brought clean, pragmatic service to the city.

The timing and circumstances added to the humor - and the point. Nichols was speaking on the day President Obama signed national health care into law -- amid cries and slurs from opponents that this was the country's Armageddon takeover by Socialism, whose most famous practitioner in the US was Zeidler.

And Nichols was speaking 50 years after Zeidler left office as the last major Socialist leader elected in the US. The talk also came 100 years after the bigger landmark, when Socialists swept to power at Milwaukee's City Hall, resulting as Nichols pointed out, "in the Page One headline in the New York Times: Red Triumph in the Middle West."

Nichols' main theme dated back a century to Victor Berger, a socialist campaign manager, 5th District rep to the US Congress (elected twice by Milwaukeeans after the House refused to seat him because of his anti-militarism during World War I) and pioneer editor of the Milwaukee Leader.

The history lesson he offered will come as a shock to Tea Party rallyers and Fox bloggers but they owe their free speech and free press protection to oppose government policy because of spirited defense of the Bill of Rights from a Milwaukee



John Nichols reminds Tea Partyers how their big defender of free speech was a Milwaukee socialist.

Socialist. Berger won some defining opinions about free speech from the most famous justices on the US Supreme Court of the time, Oliver Wendell Holmes and Louis Brandeis.

The Zeidler anecdotes were prelude to the main theme, but they vividly spoke to the current exaggerated turmoil - and to the wry amusement Nichols adopted throughout. He recalled teasing Zeidler about his devotion to the Socialist Party label even after Republicans, Democrats, Greens and whatever had shanghaied concepts of good service through government. Zeidler gave Nichols back as good as he got in defending the ideas of his party even if its actual influence had waned in America.

Then again, Nichols said looking at today's political rhetoric, "I guess we have to stop joking" about socialism's evaporation.

"Over the past weekend, half of the Congress of the United States, Rush Limbaugh, Glen Beck and Sarah Palin all said socialism was taking over the United States. Who am I to argue with them?"

Pointing to the one active registered Socialist in the Centennial Hall crowd, Nichols quoted her as saying, "I guess we'd better start taking over the government because right now we can't get 10 people to our meetings."

"But in truth," Nichols said, "Frank would have loved every part of this weekend" when health care finally passed in Congress. "He would have been amused that a little bit of health insurance would be described as socialism."

"But he would also have been pleased that a framework for national health care was finally put in place. It did what the Socialist Party said in 1900, 1904" and on and on "even in 1976 when Frank Zeidler was the party's candidate for president -- that the government has a role in providing health care to Americans."

Nichols in his syndicated columns has also written extensively that a lot is still missing in the health legislation, so as he said at Centennial Hall, "This is probably not as good a plan as Frank would have proposed."

"But the bill realizes another of Frank Zeidler's beliefs" - the

importance of racial and gender diversity. That belief "was not just to be nice to black people or women," Nichols explained, but because "their involvement would bring a better country." And now he and the late Frank Zeidler have their proof.

"As I heard all the talk the last few days about how presidents from Teddy Roosevelt on - here Nichols rattled off the familiar litany through Truman, Johnson, Nixon, Reagan and Clinton - "proposed health care and all failed . . .

"Well, Frank would have very much appreciated that when we put a woman in charge of the House and a black man as president, we got health care."

Nichols' talk was the third in the annual lecture series, and was dedicated to the memory of Zeidler's widow, Agnes, who died last year. One of their daughters, Anita, attended and she and other notables there were saluted by Nichols - including elected officials past and present, and colleagues of the Zeidlers.

Committee chair of the Zeidler lecture series is Philip Blank, retired member of the AFT. The moderator handling the entertaining question and answer period was Dawn Drellos. The event was televised for broadcast by Milwaukee public TV.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

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# New air crews nest here



AirTran pilots and flight attendants joining the company's new Milwaukee units were given a union welcome April 8 at the Wyndham Hotel, with more than a dozen unions dropping by to say hello. Speaking at the event was ALPA's head of contract negotiations, Linden Hilman (top right). Mixing with the AirTran crews and such guests as Sam Gallo, business agent for restaurant-hotel workers Local 122, was Cat Reed (right below), leader of the Midwest flight attendants who are still seeking to return Frontier flight attendants to the AFA fold. ALPA also revealed that 14 of the Midwest pilots let go by Republic Airlines have now been hired by AirTran. Both ALPA and AFA are now in a battle to get AirTran management to negotiate new contracts with them, and Milwaukee unions are pledging support in that campaign when AirTran's board meets in Milwaukee in May.



## AFL-CIO July events

The AFL-CIO will keep up the pressure for more jobs and legislative involvement in labor issues at its national Workers' Voice State Legislative Conference to be held in Louisville, Kentucky, at the Hyatt Regency there July 22-24, 2010. This year's conference will focus on the jobs crisis and developing a state working families' agenda that provides solutions to the crisis.

The AFL-CIO will host two other events in the same time frame Sunday July 25th -- at the National Labor Caucus of State Legislators, it will organize a lunch time policy meeting/discussion and an early evening cocktail reception.

For registration and issue information - contact Christine Silvia-DeGennaro at (202) 637-5177 or email [csilvia@aflcio.org](mailto:csilvia@aflcio.org).

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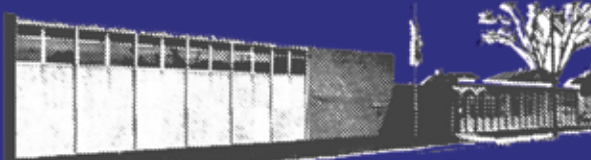
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# This fight is for patients more than union

It was unclear as we went to press whether the Wisconsin legislature would conclude its current session by passing a combined version of Senate bill 108 introduced by Rep. Judy Robson and Assembly bill 152 offered by Rep. Sandra Pasch, both trained nurses.

There is general consensus that the bill is the right move. It protects both patients and medical professionals by banning mandatory overtime for health care workers, despite opposition from hospitals. Their lobbying groups argue that the danger and death of patients from fatigue should be balanced against the cost of actually paying professionals to work at the top of their skills -- a money versus sanity debate that of late has dominated discussion of health care.

The bills are strongly supported by the professional nurses of Wisconsin. The main union - Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals (WFNHP), American Federation of Teachers - has launched a new website spelling out the irrefutable facts and figures behind the legislation.

At www.nomandatoryovertime.org you will not only learn that 15 states have already passed laws to protect patients by limiting forced overtime, you can also browse the studies and surveys that detail how nurses are forced to work beyond the end of their shift, sometimes up to 16 hours in a row. Exhausted caregivers inevitably put patients at risk.

The Institute of Medicine reports that as many as 98,000 patients die from medical errors in hospitals each year. Mandatory overtime, the studies reveal, forces nurses and other care staff to work extra hours often without any advance notice.

A 2008 survey of nurses in the state revealed that more than 500 nurses listed examples of errors, most centering on medication errors. The errors reported by the nurses included giving the wrong medication, the wrong dosages, administering drugs at the wrong time and to the wrong patients. The other concerns cited were examples of nurses falling asleep at work or while driving home.

The nurses also reported that 42% have been forced to work

overtime at least once a month; 12% are mandated at least once a week.

82% of the nurses believe that mandatory overtime is an important contributor to nurse turnover; 54% responded it is a very important contributor. 73% of the nurses believe a ban on mandatory overtime would significantly improve the ability to recruit new nurses into the profession.

When asked to if quality of care suffered when nurses are required to work forced overtime, 96% said yes and 56% stated it suffers a great deal.

The majority of those cases, incidentally, do not involve

unions. Even before the website went up, AFT nurses leader Candice Owley spoke in March to the delegates she had led so many years as a member of the MALC executive board to emphasize this law was yet another case where unions are hardly the primary beneficiary. It is the patients and the non-union nurses, since so many of the state's hospitals lack the union contracts that often ban mandatory overtime.

The opposition came from hospital groups more concerned about their bottom line, she noted.

## Bowling

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# GOP stall forces interim leaps forward

For 26 months the National Labor Relations Board endured near paralysis at the top while its civil servant employees and regions tried to chug along. Only two of its five controlling board seats were filled. Workers turned away from the federal agency as ineffective in settling disputes or moving forward intelligently and decisively.

In late March, using recess appointments to break the log-jam, President Obama added two more members to the board, both Democratic appointees. A third member from the GOP side awaits Senate action.

In effect this ends a deadlock while stirring fresh outrage from those who enjoyed the status quo inherited from the Bush era.

Since January 2008, the board has had just one Democratic member, its chairwoman (so elevated by Obama) Wilma B. Liebman, and one Republican, Peter C. Schaumber. That state of affairs meant actions could be defended as perhaps technically legal but not with much conviction by any side. The board, businesses, unions and the public were reluctant to see much done since barely doing and conclusively deciding are quite different in such circumstances.

In fact the US Supreme Court has heard argument challenging the board's authority to have issued decisions with two members.

About 220 cases were pending at the time of the interim appointments, forced by Senate failure to act on long lin-

gering Obama nominations. Half of those cases were considered important, controversial issues that Liebman and Schaumber have not tackled because they don't think two members alone should decide. In about 60 cases, the two members have deadlocked.

Now Obama has added two lawyers with deep experience on union issues to the board. One, Yale graduate Craig Becker, worked as associate counsel for both the SEIU and the AFL-CIO, and has also been a persuasive scholarly voice in union-management debates.

That means he's been demonized in an active Internet campaign, likened by the US Chamber of Commerce to representing the Armageddon for America that opponents of health care cited to no avail with similar lack of facts,

"Becker will bring a very strong, pro-union, anti-employer animus to decision-making at the board," fumed Chamber executive Randel K. Johnson. The AFL-CIO's chief of staff, Jonathan Hiatt, immediately countered, telling the New York Times: "Workers have taken a beating under board rulings in recent years, and we hope the new board will provide a little more fairness." (Note that rather than Utopia, Hiatt was hoping for a bit more fairness.)

Providing a scholarly Eureka was Samuel Estreicher, a labor law professor at New York University, who predicted a more active NLRB that can finally "start doing something."

There is evidence to support



Craig Becker

the union view that the Bush era NLRB didn't give "unions a fair shake," noted the New York Times' Steven Greenhouse in quoting James J. Brudney, a labor law professor at Ohio State.

For the last decade, many unions have avoided the labor board and its elections when seeking to unionize workers. The number of board-supervised elections fell to 1,343 last year, from 3,162 a decade earlier. Unions have instead often pursued card check, seeking to persuade a majority of a workplace's employees to sign cards saying they want a union and then mounting a campaign to press management to grant union recognition.

Unions often complain that it can take two months to hold an NLRB election, letting pro-union sentiment dissipate while management campaigns against the union, often in closed-door meetings that workers are required to attend. All that while, companies can bar union organizers from setting foot on their property, illegally fire union supporters during organizing drives (facing at worst a small fine) and leaning on NLRB Bushie choices to force a three or four year delay

to reinstate the illegally terminated.

Unions cite these and other factors of delay and impasse to explain the avoidance of NLRB process reflected in the statistics, the hard push for employee free choice and the decline to 7.2% of unionized private-sector workers.

Further noted Greenhouse, "Many academic experts predict that the Democratic-dominated board will revamp rules so that unions do not feel the system is tilted against them. This could lead them to turn more to board-supervised union elections."

Among the key areas where the unions expect a fairer deal are reversing Bush era impositions that graduate teaching assistants are not employees and therefore do not have a right to unionize. Labor leaders also hope to reverse a ruling that many senior nurses are supervisors, rather than rank and file, and thus cannot join a union.

Among the fears of big business are that the NLRB will now allow union organizers within a plant, approve snap-union elections (quickies) or encourage card-check over the existing ballot process. Modest adjustments are likely to happen, but the fears the Chamber expresses are exaggerated. The full NLRB board, under Democrats or Republicans, is not noted for rushing anything but to insist on legal procedures and safeguards for both sides, as required under controlling legislation.

There are certainly curious factors to the GOP fury over Obama's 15 recess appointments. Facing far less resistant and only five nominees on the Senate floor in 2002, George W. Bush made the same number of recess appointments at a similar stage in his presidency, though Congress was clearly far more

accommodating to his choices. He actually wound up with more than 150 recess appointments.

Obama said the recess appointments were necessary because of Republican obstruction in the Senate, which is responsible for voting on hundreds of nominations.

These 15 appointees have waited an average of 214 days for a confirmation vote. In all, the White House said, Obama has 217 nominees pending including 77 who are only awaiting a final floor vote.

This 15 were the first recess moves of Obama's administration and they will stay in office until the next Congress (the end of 2011) under recess rules. Obama actually avoided controversy in most of these picks.

In fact, one is actually under attack from Obama's usual allies. Agricultural policy is a key area for Obama and has suffered from the lack of a respected industry insider, but now conservationists are complaining about Obama's pick of Islam Siddiqui as chief agricultural negotiator, since he has criticized the European ban on BGH hormone beef and helped develop pesticides for the Ag industry. However, Siddiqui also served in the Clinton administration as an expert on marketing and chemical technicalities.

Most of the GOP furor has fallen on Becker, who has written forcibly that employers had too much power in political campaigns and has championed card-check for unions. Strangely the critics neglected his fellow recess appointment to the NLRB, also a noted union lawyer - and an artist to boot. Mark Gaston Pearce, co-founder of a law firm and teacher at Cornell, is also an oil painter whose works explore his African American heritage and memories.

Looking in vain for socialists and extremists among these recess appointments, Obama's opponents could only conjure up Becker, slammed as an evil unionist, and Georgetown University Law Center Professor Chai Feldblum, slammed as an evil defender of gay rights, who will serve as one of the commissioners for the EEOC, the Equal Employment Commission.

Most of the selections will create needed movement and expertise at Treasury, Homeland Security and Commerce, most from benign but skilled bureaucrats the GOP would normally never oppose were it not for the current political climate. In fact, Obama avoided the Justice Department controversies that seem to surround every pick he makes there.

Most of the final choices so lacked controversy that few media outlets even bothered to name them.

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(6:30a.m.-10p.m.)

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(6:30a.m.-6p.m.)

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## Taxes

From Page 1

cautious sales tax and fees policies also add to the burden of lower income residents at the expense of better-heeled corporate citizens.

Combine all the new studies from all political sides and the combined necessities of taxes, rust belt history with costly decayed infrastructure, higher costs for quality all-weather roads and buildings - and Wisconsin shines even brighter considering the taxing reality of other states.

We are only about 31 among all 50 states in total government spending.

That goes with about No. 19 among the states in taxes and fees and as little as No. 27 or 28 (the math gets tricky) in total spending to run government.

Have we really done that well in the past two years? Frankly, you can offer two different scenarios to explain all this, both of which should send local talk show hosts scurrying back into the caves from whence they sprang.

The first scenario is, Gov. Doyle is the best fiscal leader we've had in decades.

Sticks in conservative radio's craw doesn't it? But despite the blame attached to Gov. Doyle for playing with transportation and hospital funds and moving money around to keep services going, he has avoided heavier taxes and emerges as the most frugal governor for the state in decades, well before Tommy Thompson (who would take quite a hit if his taxing games were exposed in the current political climate -- which may explain why he has stopped playing Hamlet and simply decided not to run again).

Doyle surpasses his



In new bipartisan tax analysis, Jim Doyle emerges as Wisconsin's most frugal governor in decades. Some will find that harder to believe than how easily they have been lied to for decades.

Republican predecessors big time partly because he was smarter with our money, stuck with restraints they imposed and actually controlled the excess spending they didn't. His manner may have annoyed many but measured on results he looks darn good.

In taxes, though, perception sometimes trumps reality, so many won't believe that. Certainly not the Tea Party activists who have finally started drawing crowds in the hundreds much like progressive causes have been doing for years (though the progressives' crowds are routinely ignored by the media, which always flocks to the new loud voices on the block).

Ironically, though, the statistics are inescapable that the Tea Party "anti-tax" cry comes eight years late and is aimed at the wrong spendthrifts. Milwaukee magazine's Bruce Murphy, hardly an apologist for the liberal agenda, provided a wicked aside in his analysis: "My point is not that Democrats are fiscal conservatives but that Republicans aren't."

Those who find Doyle as savior too hard to swallow (and that would be a simplistic reading of the figures, though he had done great in the hardest revenue crisis the state has faced in decades), there is an alternative scenario that I find more convincing than the thought we've turned everything around in the last two years..

Unfortunately, this scenario validates the "Hello, Suckers!" vision of Wisconsin voters.

It confirms that for decades they have been shanghaied, bamboozled and blind-sided by biased data that labeled Wisconsin a "tax hell." The dispensers have been GOP politicians in and out of power, conservative manufacturer-commerce lobbyists, entrenched talk show hosts, anti-tax think tanks and a barrage of bad studies promoted and sometimes concocted by the media (note how Journal Sentinel was just forced to reverse and try to explain away its earlier weak interpretations).

Our tax picture may have gotten better under Doyle, but it has been misrepresented all along, if you look inside the numbers. Confronting a public that believes in that tax hell, and now facing a very real and deep economic malaise caused in large part by those bad tax policies and reports, politicians on both sides can't contemplate taxes as a road to higher revenue and won't fix what are obvious flaws in our current tax system (too much reliance on income and property taxes, too much cost to middle class and poor families while corporations continue to escape).

The lingering façade of a tax hell continues to make us vulnerable to such games as County Executive Walker played on Milwaukee in April. More than a year ago, he falsely warned of a

Wait a minute... Since when did our Income Tax Return start saying "Mail your Payment Check directly to Goldman Sachs.?"



Find other Mark Hurwitz cartoons at [www.hurwitzgraphics.com](http://www.hurwitzgraphics.com)

\$15 million county budget deficit. Last summer he relied on his media and talk show buddies to pooh-poo the County Board analysts who debunked that invention. This month he proclaimed a nearly \$9 million surplus.

County economics did not get \$24 million better. Fear invoked by tax nightmares allowed Walker to shred county services with massive layoffs and millions of dollars in deferred maintenance. Now he credits his tax cuts, but simple math exposes that lower than expected health care costs would have given the county a surplus anyway.

Yet amazingly, some people still believe his political fabrica-

tion, just as they believed those years of erroneous tax reports and projections.

The facts and deeper rounded studies may make clear how hornsogged Wisconsin citizens have been by tax myths, and how those myths actually allowed the state to shortchange its obligations to fund public education, or save for a rainy day, and it created gaps in services we will all pay extra for over the years.

Better knowledge won't reverse overnight the "throw the rascals out" fever in the public and stop the reliance on "hello suckers" insults to the citizens. It remains to be seen if common sense can resurface by the next round of elections.

## Just paying your taxes would help state a lot

A probing new report by the Institute for Wisconsin's Future takes aim at the deliberate tax avoidance that plays a big part in Wisconsin's yearly loss of \$1.2 billion to the "Tax Gap," the difference between what is legally owed by taxpayers and what is actually paid. This equals one out of every \$10 collected by the state as general purpose revenue.

The new report, "Wisconsin's Billion-Dollar Tax Gap-how uncollected taxes can help fill the state's budget hole," seeks to distinguish between the honest mistake - people confused by complex tax laws - and notes how many responsible citizens and business owners pay their taxes and support services and infrastructure needed for prosperous communities.

But it offers harsh insights into the deliberate games that force property taxes to go up to make up for lost state dollars.

It focuses on a series of deliberate ploys by individuals, business owners and corporations skipping out on paying income tax; by internet buyers and others avoiding sales tax; even by smokers sneaking around the cigaret tax by going out of state.

The report also offers remedies, such as better information



IWF's Jack Norman to state officials. Reports such as the IWF make up too much of the hard evidence the state must work with.

Technology and communication upgrades would improve getting that money back, as would full staffing at the Wisconsin Department of Revenue.

The IWF, whose research director is former award winning business reporter Jack Norman, also urges simplified tax laws because Wisconsin's tax structure is too complicated due to the proliferation of new exemptions, deductions and credits, all making the regulations too wordy and too easy to manipulate.

The report from the non-profit research and public education organization is available at [www.wisconsinsfuture.org](http://www.wisconsinsfuture.org).

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# Meet the wealthy who want to be taxed

By Naomi Sobel

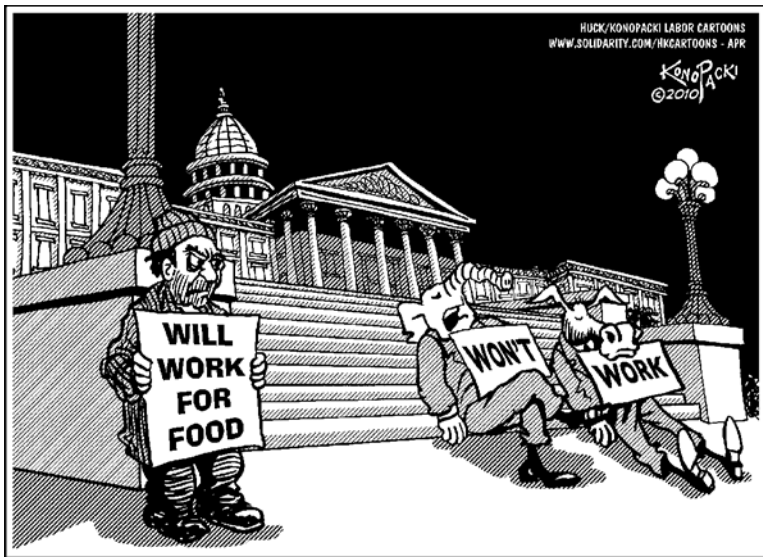
Special to Labor Press

President Obama has made it clear that he wants to erase the Bush-era tax cuts for the highest earners in the country, even as he preserves the tax cuts for middle- and working-class Americans.

There are plenty of Republicans and even some Democrats who are ready to pounce on this proposal. They'll say it will hinder economic recovery, even though the change will only affect about 2.5% of all US taxpayers.

As someone who would pay those higher taxes, I support Obama's plan. By effectively raising the tax rate for the wealthiest Americans, Congress could generate as much as \$43 billion in new revenue, every year.

We urgently need to find ways to pay for long-deferred investments in education, infrastructure, and other essential parts of what keeps America going. These public goods all require revenue, and right now our government is giving money



back to those of us that need tax cuts the least.

Because my own family's good fortune came out of a century of public investments, it makes sense to me that a substantial part of our wealth should be reinvested for the public good.

In 1900, my great-great-grandfather co-founded a mining and construction business in Utah. Shortly after that, the company obtained a number of federal contracts for large infra-

structure projects out west, including railroads, bridges, and dams. Perhaps the most famous of these was the Hoover Dam—the largest construction project the US government had ever tackled.

Our family business relied on existing infrastructure like roads and bridges to transport materials. It benefited from government grants intended to spur additional development. We also benefited from our nation's remarkable system of property laws, deeds, patents, and mortgage systems.

Our business was built upon a commonwealth of public resources, scientific knowledge, and shared institutions. Those of

## Comment

us who have disproportionately benefited from these investments have a corresponding patriotic responsibility to reinvest in the common good.

Some critics worry that increasing taxes on America's wealthiest citizens will impede growth. But they ignore that tax rates on the wealthy have dramatically fallen over the last six decades.

My grandfather taught his three children that their earnings should be distributed in thirds: A third for charitable community organizations, a third for taxes, and a third for themselves. But today, many wealthy Americans pay far less than a third of their income in taxes, because tax rates have been slashed and the income from capital gains is taxed at much lower rates than income from wages.

That's among the main reasons we must change our tax code, shifting obligation to those of us with the greatest capacity to pay.

During the past 30 years, however, federal policy has moved in the opposite direction. We have seen a great tax shift in this country, off the wealthy and

onto the middle and working class. Reduced income taxes at the top, a shrinking capital gains tax, the diminished estate tax—these policies have contributed to an increasingly unequal society where today the richest 10% of families own two-thirds of the wealth.

That's why, along with hundreds of other members of Wealth for the Common Good, a network of wealthy individuals and business leaders, I have signed a petition asking Congress and President Obama to reverse the irresponsible 2001 and 2003 tax cuts on households with incomes over \$235,000. It would be a crucial first step to rebalancing our tax code.

The myth of the "self-made businessman" persists in this country. Of course my family members worked hard. But without many public investments, our family enterprise simply wouldn't exist. I support higher taxes on the wealthy to continue this tradition of public investments. It will give other families the opportunity to succeed the way we have.

*The author, also an editor living in Boston, is a member of Wealth for the Common Good, wealthforcommongood.org.*

Distributed by MinutemanMedia

## MALC's massive fund-raising event

Rep. Gwen Moore (D-WI) will be the keynote speaker, noted radio and media personality Eric Von will serve as emcee and other dignitaries will join the special awards program, raffles, mingling hour and sit-down dinner at the first annual fund-raiser for the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, AFL-CIO, the primary mover on worker issues and main conduit of like-concerned organizations for Milwaukee, Ozaukee and Washington counties.

The notable event, timed to a number of campaigns the MALC will be heavily involved in, will start with 5 p.m. registration Saturday, June 5, at the Crystal Ballroom of the Hilton Milwaukee City Center, 509 W. Wisconsin Ave. Individual tickets are \$75, sponsorships and tables are also available for any interested groups, locals, councils and federations. In addition, \$99 rooms are available at the hotel for arriving guests if you contact the Hilton.

Registration for the dinner is encouraged by May 24. Contact the event chair, Lynnda Guyton at (414) 771-7070 or email [lynnda@milwaukeelabor.org](mailto:lynnda@milwaukeelabor.org). Checks or money orders can also be sent in her care to MALC, 633 S. Hawley Rd., Milwaukee, WI 53214.

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# Health

From Page 1

holes, someone who may pay a bit more, a business that will complain. You don't have to be a cynic to recognize that the tricksters can stay months ahead of the police.

Aside from people in need, the main beneficiary of this reform is the private insurance industry, which will soon pick up millions of much healthier patients. Normally that should bring down costs for all while providing more enduring profits.

There are also teeth in the bill to prevent premium mischief, but teeth take time to clamp down. They can't bite as quickly

as the rhetorical flourishes and excess that will certainly speed around the country faster than affordable care.

So this will indeed be a race not just against falsehoods but against money. The US Chamber of Commerce has already indicated it is adding \$50 million to combat Obama supporters in the fall elections, atop the \$144 million ad campaign it wasted trying to defeat health reform. It is not the only well-heeled negative force, but there is a push from the other side as well, both money and particularly grassroots.

The Democrats have pledged major dollars to defeat GOP naysayers and a number of unions are sending bankrolls and

street leverage state by state against Democrats who gained support from working families and then opposed their needs. On top of the hit list from both AFL-CIO and Change to Win unions are such characters as Arkansas Sen. Blanche Lincoln and Democratic House members John Adler (D-N.J.), Daniel Lipinski (D-Ill.), Zack Space (D-Ohio), Jason Altmire (D-Pa.), Michael Arcuri (D-N.Y.), Stephen Lynch (D-Mass.) and Mike McMahon (D-N.Y.).

Unions have strong membership in other districts where they are promising hard support for threatened lawmakers who voted for health care including Chris Carney (D-Pa.), John Boccieri (D-Ohio) and Charlie Wilson (D-Ohio).

So it will be a race to see if the real facts outstrip the falsehoods and corporate money. What are those facts? The ones most people know:

The new law ends insurance companies' most abusive practices, including denying coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, beginning in 2014 for adults, and this September for children.

This is no small deal. The insurance industry already tried to weasel out of covering sick kids, but the media to its credit seized on that post-signing "sleazy maneuver" and the companies backed away, while still trying to impose higher premiums. The new law, however, will step in. It also eliminates annual and lifetime limits on benefits and ends discriminatory premiums for women and requires government review of excessive rate increases.

The bill lowers health care costs for working families by creating new health insurance exchanges to increase competition and provides tax credits and cost-sharing assistance for middle- and lower-income families to purchase insurance. Some of these health insurance pools will start in about two months to bridge the gap on pre-existing coverage elimination.

The tax on health care benefits in high-cost plans has been reduced by 85% and delayed until 2018.

The bill also helps seniors purchase prescription drugs, closes the Medicare prescription drug "donut hole" and ensures seniors get free preventive care under Medicare. Seniors are being scared with a potential slowing of the rate of increase in benefits in a couple of years and by the myth that eliminating excess profits to insurance companies in the Advantage plans are somehow affecting their benefit level, which it doesn't.

One thing many families will praise immediately -- young people can remain on parents' insurance until age 26 as long as they are dependents and don't have jobs that offer such insurance. This is not just a cost saving but a real comfort for families that saw their kids leave col-



It was mainly fans of Gwen and Internet recorders that mobbed Rep. Moore at Mitchell Field after her health care vote -- and some found that lack of mass media attention reflective of the neglect to many of the goodies the bill actually does include.

## Little known but in the bill

There are pluses in this bill you have heard little about, if anything. These are a series of sunlight remedies and targeted health provisions. They will benefit pockets of people, pockets quickly mounting into millions of people -- but those winners won't become advocates for the bill as quickly as those crazy doomsday predictions can speed around the Internet

- For instance, did you know the bill requires swag disclosure? That is a sunshine idea that was once bipartisan for pharmaceutical reps and device manufacturers to disclose all the goodies they give doctors that may constitute a conflict of interest. The law requires Health and Human Services to post these "transparency reports" on a searchable open website.

- HHS must also immediately develop background checks, a national system for conducting criminal background checks of prospective health care workers who would deal directly with patients in long-term care facilities or private homes.

- To attack the cycle that we don't know what we are eating, and therefore claim we can't eat healthier, the law mandates menu labeling for national chains (at least 20 outlets) to post "nutrient content disclosure statements" - in other words, calorie counts and disclosure.

- Long-argued needs for the tribal communities and women are also addressed. Indians face the worst health disparities of any minority group in the US (suicide, alcoholism, tuberculosis) and the bill puts funding and education needs the medial community has longed begged for.

- Similarly, women's group wanted more attention paid to workplace training and research on postpartum depression - and it's in this bill. So is a requirement for companies employing over 49 workers to provide "reasonable" break time and a private location - other than a bathroom - for breastfeeding mothers.

- Another family concern is the bill's immediate increase in the federal adoption credit, which goes up \$1,000 to \$13,170 per child and now becomes refundable.

lege and leave coverage for years before their health was protected.

So why, you may well ask, has it become routine to attack such a middle of the road bill as the work of some anti-capitalist devil? Is protecting traditional families from cradle to grave so terrible because you also protect gays, working women and other questionable subgroups? Yet otherwise fiscally responsible citizens believe the name-calling, the rumors, the inventions and ominous threats.

The extent of that reaction has become ludicrous. But it's been fun for Factcheck.org, a news site that loves to attack both sides. It joined the Washington Post in taking apart Newt Gingrich and Wisconsin Rep. Paul Ryan for one particularly outrageous concoction, the claim that the health care bill forces the IRS to spend \$10 bil-

lion more. Gingrich alone drew a lot of air time saying "'One of the things in the health bill is 16,000 additional IRS agents.'

Factcheck detailed the progression of the Gingrich and Ryan myth, how the entire IRS operating budget was drawn into the fabrication (incidentally, only 15% of IRS employees are agents). The Post laughingly suggested Gingrich had learned from Bill Clinton how to parse the meaning of "is" even when the word "is" wasn't there:

"There's nothing like this in the health bill. The word 'is' is wrong, as even the original GOP spin only used the word 'may.' The number 16,000 is wrong. The word 'agents' is wrong. But it's at least efficient: Not just anyone could pack four falsehoods into 13 words."

-- Dominique Paul Noth

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## Law changes in time for mothers

By Karyl Richson

Special to Labor Press

Mom has always been there to nurture and take care of you. Mother's Day -- May 9 this year -- is the perfect time to give back and look out for her. If she's having a hard time paying for her prescription drugs, tell her about the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan and the extra help available through Social Security.

If your mother, or any special woman in your life, is covered by Medicare and has limited income and resources, she may be eligible for this extra help to pay her monthly premiums, annual deductibles, and prescription co-payments. The extra help is worth an average of \$3,900 per year.

Perhaps you've looked into the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan before, and discovered that Mom did not qualify due to her income or resources. In 2010, the law has changed.

A new "twist" in the law makes it easier than ever to qualify and to figure out whether Mom is eligible.

To qualify, she must be receiving Medicare and have income limited to \$16,245 for an individual or \$21,855 for a married couple living together. Even if her annual income is higher, she still may be able to get some help with monthly premiums, annual deductibles, and prescription co-payments. Some examples in which income may be higher include if she or her husband:

- Support other family members who live with them
- Have earnings from work;

or

- Live in Alaska or Hawaii; and
- Have resources limited to \$12,510 for an individual or \$25,010 for a married couple living together.

Resources include such things as bank accounts, stocks and bonds. We do not count her house or car as resources.

Thanks to this "twist" in the law, we no longer count any life insurance policy she has as a resource, and we no longer count as income any financial assistance she receives regularly from someone else to pay her household expenses like food, mortgage or rent, utilities or property taxes.

Don't take our word for it, check it out at [www.socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp).

While you're there, you can fill out an easy-to-use online application for your mom at [www.socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp). To apply by phone or have an application mailed to you, call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778) and ask for the Application for Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs (SSA-1020). Or go to the nearest Social Security office.

If you'd like to learn more about the Medicare prescription drug plans and special enrollment periods, visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227; TTY 1-877-486-2048).

What better gift could you give her this Mother's Day?

*The author is the Social Security Public Affairs specialist in Milwaukee.*

## For minorities on the rails

Seeking to give disadvantaged businesses a fair shot at high-speed rail work and funding, Rep. Gwen Moore (D-Wis.) April 14 introduced legislation that would extend Department of Transportation (DOT) contracting goals to rail work as it now applies to highways, public transportation and aviation safety.

Since 1998, DOT has been required to direct at least 10% of total funding for highways and similar work to qualifying small businesses. Moore's bill, recognizing the nation's investment in mass transit and high speed rail, would apply the same standard there to help create an unbiased contracting process for small businesses owned and operated by women, African Americans, Native Americans, Latino Americans, and Asian Americans among other qualifying owners.

Milwaukee is emerging as a center location of rail efforts as home to a Talgo assembly plant and new funding for KRM (Milwaukee to Chicago) and a future Milwaukee to Madison rail line. Disadvantaged Businesses here could particularly benefit from her nationwide push. Moore noted how "Minority-owned small businesses have been hit particularly hard during this recession. Small businesses are key to economic growth and development, and especially right now, they need every opportunity they can get."



## When everyone needs resources, unions respond

Confidential answers from community specialists at a time in our society when no one should feel alone or isolated in worrying about really tough economic issues:

Laid off, worried about unemployment? Afraid of being laid off, fear of paying your mortgage or credit card debt, of feeding your family, or keeping health care? Should you think of retraining?

Does anyone care? Turns out there are many in the same boat and many experts who know how to help. They will be gathered to work in confidence with visitor to the Workers Community Resources Fair arranged by local organized labor to benefit everyone. Arranged through the Milwaukee Area Labor Council and its community services staff the

fair will be held, along with light refreshments, from 4-7 p.m. Thursday, May 6, at the union hall of Brewery Workers Local 9 (United Auto Workers), 9618 W. Greenfield. Ave.

A number of community agency experts will be on hand to answer questions, but advance word you're attending will help the organizers plan numbers and refreshments. Contact (all 414 area codes) Vince Schmitt, financial secretary-treasurer of the Brewery Workers, 475-5898, Annie Wacker, AFL-CIO community services liaison, 771-9830 or [annieaflcio@sbcglobal.net](mailto:annieaflcio@sbcglobal.net), or AFL-CIO area service organizer Jenisse Volpintesta, 771-7070, ext. 12, or [jvolpintesta@wisafclcio.org](mailto:jvolpintesta@wisafclcio.org)

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