



OBAMA LABORFEST '08

Were you there when candidate Obama electrified Laborfest? This is one of the banner moments of memorabilia you'll find Sept. 7 at this year's Laborfest. **Stories below and inside.**

Special Labor Day Edition

AFL-CIO MILWAUKEE

LABOR PRESS

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MILWAUKEE AREA LABOR COUNCIL, AFL-CIO

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MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN



Thursday, August 27, 2009



(USPS 350-360)

Laborfest Join special celebration

Organized labor's annual Milwaukee party -- on the national holiday workers helped create -- has always been accessible and free to Milwaukee families. On Labor Day 2009 it's grown more inclusive in offerings while elevating the celebration of union personality and power. Events, promotions, sponsors and participants have grown despite hard economic times to encompass the pre-parade gathering at Zeidler Union Square Park, the 11 a.m. downtown parade and the subsequent free festival on the Summerfest grounds until 5 p.m. Monday, September 7.

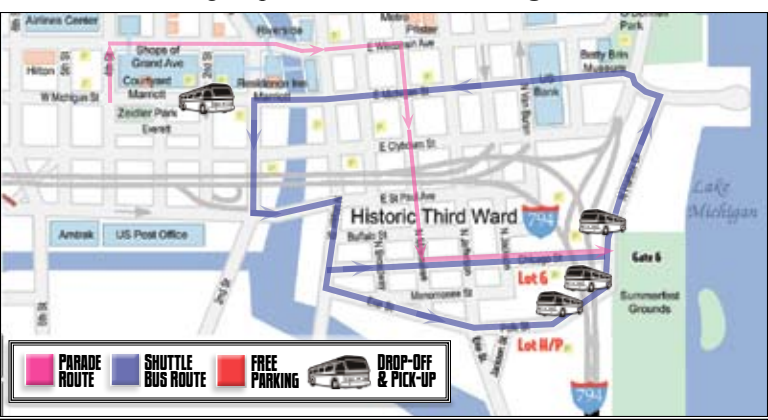
One reason to invite the whole community is that this year also celebrates the 50th anniversary of the main planner and sponsor, the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, AFL-CIO. Among the new:

THE PARADE WITHIN THE PARADE has been rescued from a downpour Aug. 8. Now it will form the tail-end of the Labor Day parade, and also provide a special presentation at Summerfest of puppets, performers and community messages. This is the All-City Parade and Pageant. Blown out by bad weather, it will add artistry and community purposes to Laborfest using some 200 volunteers (some of them now union members). **See the story on Page 12.**

A FIFTY YEAR SPECIAL: The 50th anniversary has also produced a handsome commemorative booklet stuffed with essays, historic photos and thank-yous from sponsors, unions and Milwaukee families. The book will be inside each special shopping bag sold for \$5 at Laborfest bearing the MALC 50th anniversary logo. Also being sold on the grounds are T-shirts with a special logo, \$10 each, though many unions have also been selling customized versions.

Alongside the union industry exhibitions will be memorabilia displays from MALC and Laborfest's past. Since July the labor council has also been giving out its special celebratory poster.

The labor council's 50th year keeps the best of the past including Bingo, a supervised children's area, sports events and live dance music, while adding surprises. **See stories on Pages 10 and 11**



Moore's model town hall not what media was pursuing

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

Without pointing a finger back at themselves, the media has had a fine time showing the worst visuals, hyping in print the excesses of behavior, parroting the banal simplicities and then trying to pontificate thoughtfully about what happened in August to town hall democracy and discussions of health care reform.

They should also spend some time explaining what happened to the media itself.

A few pundits have pointed out that this entire exercise is not about health care but a clash of opposing philosophies.

On one side, the people who lost last November but still believe that government can only harm not help.

On the other, people who want to get out of a mess created by that attitude and think that, when profit is not the motive,



Rep. Moore (with UW's Tom Oliver) gave serious answers while journalists scoured the crowd for hooters.

government does some things better, particularly safe drinking water, disease control, social security, veterans health and Medicare - the last two, despite their flaws, ranked as the best targeted health care America does. And both, might I add, pragmatic socialism in which the

Comment

More health care coverage
Pages 19, 21, 22, 23

government provides long-term help and cost-saving oversight.

The philosophical divide benefits conservatives. They can still behave as if they are a temporary minority party, as opposed to as outdated as the Whigs.

To others in the media, this whole affair has been an exercise in fear. That's convincing as explanation. Fear did seem the great motivator behind the boos, yelling and attempts to disrupt conversation.

Fear about health does consume each of us. It brings with it concerns about death. (Must we die? Must we even talk about it?). No one wants to question their own health system or life

Media continued Page 20

Why this Skylight hasn't shattered

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

It was an extraordinary summer of cultural angst. The fury unleashed on the Internet by singers, actors, musicians, designers, managers, artisans and the rest of the close-knit Skylight family masked their pain and disappointment. This was not about lost wages. Much of America's pride in its workmanship isn't.

The New York Times devoted a major story to the imminent downfall of Milwaukee's pioneer classical music institution. It recorded the unfolding shock and dismay over the Skylight board's

June firing of admired artistic director Bill Thiesen, the handing of the reins to managing director Eric Dillner quickly followed by the departure of a legion of Thiesen co-workers and believers.

And then! Like the deus ex machina at the end of classical drama, a solution (to everything but the money crisis) fell from the heavens August 5. Dillner resigned, two major icons of the Skylight's move to the Broadway Theater Center, artistic director Colin Cabot and managing director Joan Lounsbery, agreed to take back the reins for a season and Thiesen agreed to direct four

shows.

It is still worth pondering how we got into this mess and why we are not really out of it.

The ins-and-outs are well recounted in existing blogs by two veteran critics (just departed from the Journal Sentinel) whom I once worked closely with, Damien Jaques and Tom Strini. The obvious conclusion was that the Skylight board had lost its way, progressive reputation and business acumen in one enormous swoop of fear over hundreds of thousands of dollars in looming deficits.

The board even reneged on a

Skylight continued Page 6




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Labor in Pulpits is on, but more carefully

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That was the decision this year by the Milwaukee Area Labor Council.

It is elevating its direct contact with faith groups through a luncheon Sept. 29 while simultaneously restructuring its annual Labor Day pulpits initiative (Sept. 4-7) to echo religious teachings about the central need for health care.

The right of every individual to adequate health care flows from the sanctity of human life.

-- Imam Sa'dullah Khan

Last year, the topics and the speakers were stretched too thin and all congregations were not

successfully served, as labor council leaders have acknowledged. So while they are restructuring the role of the Faith Community for Worker Justice, they are urging all faiths to focus a little time over Labor Day -- not on one particular health care reform proposal but on the underlying philosophy about health care that actually meets at the center of all major religious texts and teachings.

Every person has a fundamental human right to quality health care - affordable, accessible and compassionate.

-- Catholic Healthcare Perspective

This year the council is emphasizing those teachings and offering its limited number of

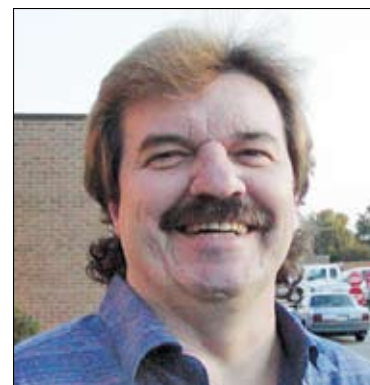
speakers for Labor in the Pulpits, but encouraging any congregation that wants to be involved to examine and speak up on the beliefs of their faith.

If you need a speaker, or if you want to share religious teachings with your congregation, contact Jay Reinke at (414) 771-7828 or email jayaflcio@sbcglobal.net.

Health is not a luxury nor should it be the sole possession of a privileged few . . . By "pricing out" a portion of this country's population from health care coverage, we mock the image of God.

-- Rabbi Alexander Schindler, Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Along with helping with



Jay Reinke

speakers and with providing some truly inspiring essays, Reinke will also put together a master list of participating religious communities to spread the word before the Labor Day weekend.

Meanwhile, the secretary-treasurer and chief operating office of the council, Sheila Cochran, has been promoting an

active direct relationship between issues of labor and issues of faith. Tuesday, Sept. 29, will mark the launch of this effort through a luncheon at a downtown hotel.

Food, fellowship and good conversation will be the centerpiece from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Milwaukee's Hilton Hotel. A small cost will attach as the MALC serves as host for this first Religion and Labor Luncheon.

Leading faith and labor leaders will discuss the intersection of needs and concerns. Cochran has invited a number of leading ministers from several faiths to plan the event and program. For more information or to RSVP, call the council at (414) 771-7070 or email sheila@milwaukeeelabor.org.

Carpenters schedule October training

The Chicago Regional Council of Carpenters has scheduled a free two-day Continuing Education Training & Industry Networking exploration for architects, engineers, designers, specifiers, firm production staff, facility managers and students on Wednesday and Thursday, October 14th and 15th, from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Carpenter Training Center in Elk Grove Village, Illinois.

More than 30 free Continuing Education Units (CEUs) from industry leaders will be offered.

Complete event/class information, available credits and CEU registration are available online at www.ceu.chicap.org.

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3 Midwest OPEIU locals agree to trial merger

Office and Professional Employees International. It is a familiar union to the Milwaukee labor council. Not just because its core staff (the newspaper editor, the advertising specialist, the office secretary/bookkeeper) are all represented by Local 9. (In fact, many unions' offices are).

Not because its top honcho, International President Michael Goodwin, was a keynote speaker at a recent Laborfest.

It's also because many members of other unions remember answering the call on snowy, rain days, marching in solidarity and even encircling downtown hotels, to support Local 35 and its efforts at Miller Brewery.

Many will be surprised to learn that there's a growth fever in OPEIU, which already has more than 100,000 members. One proof is the new partnership among several of the existing Wisconsin and Illinois locals of OPEIU.

June of this year marked the start of a two-year trial merger that brings together Local 35 in the Milwaukee and Ozaukee counties area, Local 39 of Madison and Local 391, representing some 150 employees at Illinois' Roosevelt University. (In April 2011 the membership of these locals will conduct a refer-



Caught in the August delegate crowd: Brian Reid, business agent for the newly merged OPEIU local

endum to see if the purposes are being met and whether the trial merger should become permanent.)

Brian Reid, the business agent for the new local, understands that for the next two years the local's new name won't roll off the tongue: OPEIU Midwest United Local 2009. He confessed that he is also having trouble not just saying "Local 35" at the Milwaukee delegate meetings.

The new partnership is also a sign of real growth and emerging interest in the nation's workforce of office professionals. OPEIU made the Midwest change largely to respond effectively to inquiries to expand. Now with 3,000 some members it is better positioned to point up its successes at the bargaining table and elevate awareness of its political clout. It has already announced plans to work hard

for health care reform and the re-election in 2010 of Sen. Russ Feingold.

Other key purposes of the trial merger are to share expenses and to elevate benefits for all members. The new local operates with its own executive board (bringing together the boards of the previous locals) and five officers, all veterans of one or another of 35, 39 or 391.

For the Milwaukee labor council, it also reflects growth. This council can't claim the Madison component (OPEIU has some 1,100 members there) but Local 35 has 1,100 dues paying

members in Milwaukee and Ozaukee counties. And Ozaukee is part of Milwaukee's expanded territory. Local 35 (oops, Midwest United Local) also represents more than its dues payers, about 2,070 workers in total since it handles contractual needs for Northwestern Mutual, which is an open shop situation.

It also boasts a new website, www.opeiu2009.org. Business Agent Reid intends to be an active presence in the Milwaukee labor council. So say hello. And you can reach him at (262) 790-0350, or breid@opeiu2009.org.

Bucyrus layoffs forecast

Last May, the Labor Press cover story and photo layout was devoted to the first-rate union contract and sales success at Bucyrus International -- but the story also discussed how a hard economic shoe was poised to drop on the company and why the USW local was confident that, even in hard times, there was a new cooperative relationship with management.

Sure enough, Bucyrus has now announced job cuts, without specifying numbers, that would affect both Local 1343 members and management and salaried positions. Insiders report that of the roughly 1,400 workers at the South Milwaukee plant, approximately 100 hourly employees and about 60 salaried positions were eliminated. The salaried positions affected were across all departments including manufacturing supervisory personnel.

Dewey Lewis, the former local president who helped negotiate the current contract (he works closely with the new president, Kevin Jaskie), pointed out to Labor Press that there were still positive numbers since the local had doubled its workers in the past two years. It may take 18 months, but most of the workers being laid off aren't looking for new jobs because they "have a good chance of being called back at some point in the future," Lewis said.

The employees in the union were placed on layoff with extensions for medical benefits based on seniority. Salaried employees were terminated with severance and placement assistance. All employees affected are eligible for extended benefits under the federal legislated COBRA provisions, which currently include a federal subsidy under the economic recovery act.

But layoffs were expected at some point this year, said Lewis. "The economy has impacted our customers to the point that, despite our backlog, mine orders are being canceled or delayed. In many instances the problem is credit shortages that won't allow them to purchase equipment."



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This alliance is a first

Talk about uncharted waters! That's where the local Graphic Communications officers and the Teamster mailers feared they were steering.

Graphic Communications Local 577-M is part of a separate, distinct and quite independent conference that united with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters a few years ago, principally for bargaining strength.

But no one had quite envisioned what would happen if a GCC local and a Teamsters local considered merger. The two locals here actually started talking about the advantages in 2007 but, as Michael Sippy, president of 577-M, confesses, even the idea was daunting.

This "would be the first to merge a mainstream Teamsters local into a Graphic Communications Conference local," noted Sippy -- and without a navigation chart.

The locals would have to jump through a lot of hoops beyond the membership concerns -- they would have to fulfill the requirements and rules of two proud boards, the Graphic Communication Conference and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT).

But mutual goals, mutual concerns about evolving stronger bargaining power and long-term compatibility (since both units have union offices in the same building, sit on similar boards and share devotion to the Allied Printing Label) paid off.

This year, the merger of IBT Mailers Local 23 into GCC Local 577-M (District Council 1), has added 260 members to the GCC and most importantly allowed Mick Maramonte to continue to represent the former Local 23 members as a business



Mick Maramonte (left) and Michael Sippy seal a deal that left both locals very satisfied.

representative and delegate to the GCC Council 1.

Maramonte retains an office in the same building where GCC is actually the landlord for the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, 633 S. Hawley Rd., and he now has access to the full time GCC support staff.

He also has the currently unenviable task of negotiating with Journal Communications since the mailers work at the newspaper. He may find much commiseration only a few steps away in the building, which also houses the Newspaper Guild (CWA), and the Wisconsin Broadcast Engineers (IBEW), currently in contract stalemate with the Journal Group.

Maramonte is particularly pleased that "members of both locals overwhelmingly approved the merger and the district council delegates unanimously concurred."

"It was worth putting in the time to get this done. Everything has worked out as envisioned."

Wall St. slapped in House

On July 31, the House slapped down Wall Street, imposing restrictions on executive pay after it became clear that nine banks that took government bailout money rewarded thousands of their employees with bonuses topping \$1 million each.

The Senate will take up the idea in September, but the House went further than President Barack Obama had suggested out of populist anger, deciding that intervention would work better than incentives.

"This is not the government taking over the corporate sector. . . . It is a statement by the American people that it is time for us to straighten up the ship," said Rep. Melvin Watt, (D-N.C.).

The vote did give Obama something he wanted. It advanced the first piece of his broader proposal to increase oversight of financial institutions. The House bill included Obama's suggestions to give shareholders a nonbinding vote on compensation packages and prohibit directors on compensation committees from having financial ties to the company and its executives.

Spurring the anger was a report the previous day by New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo that the nation's biggest banks awarded nearly 4,800 million-dollar-plus bonuses in 2008 even as their profits dwindled and they accepted billions in government aid.

Citigroup, which is now one-third owned by the government after taking \$45 billion in government money, gave 738 of its employees bonuses of at least \$1 million, even after it lost \$18.7 billion during the year, Cuomo's office said.

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Skylight

From Page 1

deal with Local 8, American Federation of Musicians, which has given management flexibility on orchestral size depending on production needs.

The negotiating team for the musicians thought there was an offer more than a year ago - until management said it didn't mean what it had written and withdrew to a hardened stance that imposed 2006 wages for 2009-2010.

Ironically, the Skylight once thrived and changed with the times by solving financial crises, which it has endured for as many years as the current Milwaukee labor council - both are celebrating a 50th anniversary.

But our show goes on. For a while it looked as if the Skylight's wouldn't.

The recession being endured by so many arts groups became an act of economic self-immolation at the Skylight without moving closer to solving the financial issues.

Ripping the heart out to save salaries has not proven a good practice for Main Street. At the Skylight it seemed a case of a once attuned board not understanding what set its own organization apart.

The board for a nonprofit cultural institution needs to be a

rainmaker far more than a naysayer. Worse, it needs to stroke the talent and deftly balance finances to make the group successful. In this case the board interfered in management beyond its capacity, and when it clearly split it resorted to the worst tactics of Harvard business school students.

It trotted out chamber of commerce simplicities on economic renewal, demonstrating how much the business community has not learned from its own past failures. It treated employees like interchangeable disposable parts (how familiar is that?) rather than the gardeners to nurture the future.

After all, right or wrong, triumph or failure, kitsch or nobility, this is Milwaukee's beloved maverick operatic company. Through spirit and creativity it knows how to pull back from the brink of disaster.

With the arrival of Cabot and Lounsbery, the season is on. The musicians want to settle their issue with fair bargaining and have already received indications from Cabot that their last offer is a go. (However, his assurance was later contradicted by a Skylight lawyer).

The artists are urging the community to stand by them. The cast is in rehearsal for the first production. There may be a renewed communal understanding of just what makes the Skylight tick. But the crisis is

hardly over and the Skylight board has more fences to mend with its performers and its public than the National Recovery Act has bridges to fix.

The important morals here? (Moving beyond the need to keep our institutional memory, which Milwaukee is fast losing.) The first lesson could be how citizens should behave in hard times, protecting what is valuable and pulling together.

The Skylight performers rely on quiet commitment, mutual respect for talent and joy in effort. Many can go elsewhere yet relish returning to dedication and camaraderie.

The Skylight workers are always a community but this time when threatened they became something like a team, a union. Which is the same thing, ideally. Internally they may disagree on the best methods but they are not going to give up the fight. They didn't expect the board to either.

In the interest of full disclosure, in a previous existence starting in the late 1960s, I covered the Skylight. In fact, founder Clair Richardson, convinced that his company could only survive with unending favorable reviews, famously tried to block my presence on opening nights and I had to intervene with my editors to keep the newspaper from retaliating. The shrewd Richardson and I quickly settled

our differences and agreed to be ourselves. The critics who followed me continued the path of holding the theater and its artists in great affection without ever pulling their punches on artistic issues.

Another connection: When my former brother-in-law, Jeffrey Olson, who ran the Skylight's fabled costume shop for decades, died two years ago after a long struggle with cancer, it was his friends from the Skylight who filled the pews at the Cathedral of St. John and raised their voices gloriously in

the music he had requested. And it was Thiesen who promptly dedicated a plaque to Olson to grace the costume shop permanently.

Innovation in the face of all rational bean-counters, standards on a shoestring, moments of grace at key turning points and teamwork against all odds have set the Skylight apart.

But so has the unique spirit of its past and present artists, whose ghosts live in the highest ceilings and lowest floors of the Broadway Theater Center.

Rally up for United Way

Labor annually makes a big push to support the agencies of United Way through workplace campaigns, special events, other generousities and treasury gifts from area unions and locals.

This event is the official Labor Kick-Off Rally for United Way. It features cocktails and appetizers (10 persons from your group for \$250 or \$30 per person).

It will be held starting at 6 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 17, at the Center of Excellence, 3841 W. Wisconsin Ave.

There's quite a bit to this kickoff. Along with the wonderful catered food, there are tours of this training facility, speeches, dignitaries, and gifts from unions -- plus the event features announcement of the most prestigious community award offered union members, named in honor of a legendary labor and United Way leader.

The annual Werner J. Schaefer Labor/United Way Community Service Award is given each year to a union member in the four-county region who reflects outstanding community service as a volunteer, resource and/or trainer.

Nominations for the Schaefer honor can be submitted until September 13.

A written explanation, nomination form and when possible a photo should accompany nominations, which are voted on by a special labor committee.

Send nominations to AFL-CIO Community Services, MALC, 633 S. Hawley Rd., Suite 106, Milwaukee, WI 53214.

To help union efforts for United Way or offer nominations for the award - or to find out what field mobilizers can do for workers in trouble - contact:

Annie Wacker - 414.771.9830 / annieaflcio@sbcglobal.net, or Mike Balistriere - 414.771.9829 / mikeaflcio@sbcglobal.net, or Jay Reinke - 414.771.9828 / jayaflcio@sbcglobal.net

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SWEET AND ASSOCIATES

A sense of justice behind auto insurance rules

By Mark L. Thomsen
Special to Labor Press

With the passage of the state budget, Wisconsin's automobile insurance rules have gotten a much needed tune-up so that they will work better for consumers and ensure everyone gets what they pay for when purchasing a policy.

The changes fall into three categories:

Who must have insurance;
How much insurance should people carry.

Changes that make sure your claims are paid when you need it most.

Beginning July 2010, Wisconsin will join 48 other states in requiring all drivers to carry insurance. Current esti-

mates are that 15% of drivers carry no insurance. In 2006 there were 8,000 accidents involving uninsured drivers. These accidents caused 78 deaths and resulted in more than \$35 million in unpaid medical bills. Public support for mandatory auto insurance is very strong and comes as no surprise as Wisconsin citizens are strong believers in personal responsibility.

Of course, having insurance is only as good as the insurance you carry. No one would believe that carrying \$100 of insurance would be sufficient to cover anything and Wisconsin has required a minimum level of insurance for many years. While this strategy is sound, it only makes sense if the minimum levels are relevant to today's medical and property costs.

The state budget wisely provides the first increase in minimum insurance levels since 1982. Beginning in 2010 the minimum level of liability insurance required will increase to \$50,000 (for injuries to a person)/\$100,000(all injuries in an accident)/\$15,000 property damage).

According to insurance industry sources 80% of the insured drivers already carry at least these amounts, so relatively few people will be affected by this change. As a matter of fact, most agents have been recommending much higher coverage for many years.

In addition, coverage for both uninsured and underinsured motorists will also be mandatory at the \$100,000 per person/\$300,000 per accident level. Uninsured motorist cov-

erage protects you if you are in an accident with a driver without insurance and underinsured motorist coverage protects you if you are in an accident with someone who does not have enough insurance to cover your injuries. Both coverages are personal and portable and cover you whether you are injured as a pedestrian, on a bike or in your car.

Finally, you need to be sure that if you are involved in an accident that you will have access to the coverage you pay for.

A number of provisions in the state budget undo some exclusions that the insurance industry helped put in place in 1995 that allowed them to deny more claims, without reducing your premiums. That meant less coverage for you and more profits for them.

Confusing issues like

reducing clauses, anti-stacking and a lack of standard definitions too often meant that consumers were unable to collect on policies they had paid for when they needed it most. The state budget returns common sense to the law and is a giant win for consumers.

Now, some companies may attempt to use these changes in the law to try to justify rate increases. My advice to you is that if your rates go up, don't simply blame the politicians, use your common sense - shop around. With over 150 insurance companies offering automobile insurance in Wisconsin, I'm sure you will find a better choice.

The author is the president of the Wisconsin Association for Justice, the state's largest voluntary bar organization defending the civil justice system.

Calendar

For updated master list of events,
visit www.milwaukeeelabor.org

Monday, August 31

Final Laborfest Planning Session
5 p.m., Yatchak Hall
633 S. Hawley Rd.

Wednesday, September 2

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

Monday, September 7

Labor Day! Laborfest!
Downtown Parade, 11 a.m.
Summerfest grounds, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Thursday, September 17

Labor Kick-Off Rally for United Way
Includes Schaefer Community Service Award
6 p.m., Center of Excellence,
3841 W. Wisconsin Ave.

Thursday-Friday, September 24-25

State AFL-CIO Health and Safety Conference
All-Day, Wyndham Hotel, Milwaukee
To register, call (414) 771-0700, extension 26

Tuesday, September 29

Labor-Faith Luncheon
Milwaukee Hilton Hotel

Wednesday, September 30

MALC Executive Board Meeting
2 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Wednesday, October 7

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

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Labor's place in US history may be assured

But its place in textbooks certainly is not

It is difficult to plan for the future if you don't understand the past.

For example, the right to form or join a union without harassment or intimidation is not a new concept. The National Labor Relations Act, also known as the Wagner Act, was signed in to law by FDR in 1935 as part of the New Deal, which lifted our nation out of the Great Depression.

This piece of information is especially empowering as we face our own economic crisis and work to pass the Employee Free Choice Act. Like the National Labor Relations Act, this bill will rebuild the middle class by allowing working people to bargain for fair wages and benefits.

But you would never know that without a basic education in labor history. As things stand today, that history is not taught in many Wisconsin schools.

This summer the Senate Education Committee held an important hearing on Senate Bill 135 /Assembly Bill 172 to determine whether Wisconsin will include labor history as part of the public school curriculum.

Wisconsin State AFL-CIO President David Newby gave the following testimony: He said:

Of all the states in America, you would think that the history of organized labor would be prominently taught in Wisconsin classrooms. After all, in 1898, when woodworkers in Oshkosh went on strike for decent wages and safe working conditions, it was Clarence Darrow who defended their leaders against



How long have unions been fighting for health care reform? This famous photo of a 2003 rally in Madison gives you some idea. But this is another long hard battle not in your children's textbooks.

charges of conspiracy. Luckily he won that case, because if the case had been lost, strikes would have been illegal and their leaders subject to draconian jail sentences.

Then in 1911, it was the Wisconsin Legislature that passed the first Workers Compensation bill in the United States, establishing a "no fault" system which guaranteed that any worker injured on the job would have their medical care paid for and would receive some compensation for lost wages. That system was so successful that it was eventually copied in some form by every state in the union.

In 1932, Wisconsin once again led the way when it passed the first Unemployment Insurance bill in the United

States. Our system of providing at least some income to the unemployed proved to be so effective in the early years of the Depression that this program too was copied in other states and then by Congress in 1935.

More recently, Wisconsin was one of the first states to pass a Family and Medical Leave law. Once again, other states followed our lead and eventually a federal Family and Medical Leave Act was passed by Congress in 1993.

"But don't they teach these things any longer?" you might ask. Actually, no they don't. If you look at the dominant American history textbooks, they might have half a dozen paragraphs out of 300 pages on the history of labor and unions (and most often it centers on the

United Farm Workers and the grape boycott of the early 1970s, interestingly enough!).

Why? Well, partly, no doubt, due to the right-ward shift of the politics of our country in the past 25 years.

But also due to the structure of the national textbook market. The two biggest markets for textbooks (chosen by a state level government panel) are Texas and California - both dominated by conservative (and generally anti-union) boards.

If a textbook is rejected by these state boards, then the publisher will find it difficult to sell enough copies in other states to make a profit. So the politics of these two state school boards essentially determine the content and politics of the textbooks that

Labor's struggles continue to this day in Milwaukee. See photos and story on Pages 16-17.

are used in the rest of the United States.

So all (this state bill) asks is that the history of labor and unions be given its due and the history of our country be taught accurately.

The Department of Public Instruction has extensive resources online for teachers to use -- so no extra training of teachers is necessary. Moreover, the bill does not specify how much attention has to be given to labor history in our classrooms.

Finally, the American Labor Studies Center (on whose board I serve) has a wealth of information and lesson plans online that teachers can use. I would urge anyone interested in this issue to check out their website: www.labor-studies.org.

There you will find not only Wisconsin's "Lessons in Labor History," developed in cooperation with the Department of Public Instruction, but also, for example, three 55-minute programs on the rise of organized labor from the Library of Congress.

We ask for your support of SB 135/AB 172 not so that unions can be glorified (our shortcomings should be taught as well), but so that an important dimension of our history, the story of how ordinary working people have banded together to improve their lives and the lives of their families, their children and grandchildren, will be taught appropriately in our schools. There are important lessons to be learned from history, and our children should know them.

Salute to all workers on
LABOR DAY

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Gerard Maciejewski, Vice President
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**LABOR DAY
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Let's hear it for (and from) volunteers

Unions are not so good at tooting their own horn. Maybe it's the focus on their own workplace issues, maybe it's the tradition of strong silent types or maybe just mistrust of publicity and the media.

So even when they step out to help the unfortunate, raise money for a charity or the arts or devote their time individually and as a group to congregation, community, neighborhood cleanups or other social improvements, you don't much hear about it.

There are a few exceptions -- one being the need for Labor Press to promote the annual health and hygiene drive for homeless shelters or the annual barbecue serving the needy at St. Ben's.

Sometimes publicity comes unbidden, as when a community almost burns down. So there was some media attention to the leap into action by a variety of unions and retirees to join the AFL-CIO Community Services team, UFCW, Hunger Task Force and Voces de la Frontera to create an emergency food pantry at IAM Lodge 66 and feed the out of work families of Patrick Cudahy until the meat plant was back on its feet. In just two days in early August, the pantry and its volunteers provided food to some 2,000 members of Patrick Cudahy families.

But the community's lack of information of most charitable efforts and public service may actually hurt the images of unions. So worries Sheila Cochran, secretary-treasurer of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council. "It was very clear during our discussions about the Employee Free Choice Act that many people do not know the value that labor adds to our community," she told union leaders and delegates as she explained why the council was doing something about it. It's time to "promote ourselves and the work we do in improving our communities, and the lives of our neighbors."

As a result, the MALC has set up a system to learn about any occasion when organized labor, individually or collectively, donates money or time to any non-profit group, be it secular or religious.

Union members can check with their local to avoid duplications. But the main thing is to start sharing. Each union can decide if they want to gather information or prefer for the members to send information directly to the Milwaukee Area Labor Council.

AFL-CIO Community Service Liaison Jay Reinke has created special forms to report both individual efforts and Community Service projects. So local leaders should send him data on any community project worked on as a group and members can send in individual efforts.

Reinke can provide forms for electronic filing. You may reach him at (414) 771-9828 or at jayafclcio@sbcglobal.net to get the forms or ask for more information.

The hope is to get strong response and every three months or so generate a report to be presented at the monthly delegate meeting. The information can also anchor articles from time to time in the Labor Press. This is also an avenue to publicize locals and unions and also nominate people and groups for labor community awards.

Incidentally, you can get involved in volunteer work by attending the annual Labor Kick-Off Rally for United Way at the Center of Excellence. See story on Page 6.

FARING WELL AT THE FAIR

New signs, new displays, spacious placement, the Harley to help sell raffle tickets, and shifts of volunteers made the Union Label Booth at the State Fair attractive and pressure-free Aug. 6-16. It also made for success as some 1,100-1,200 raffle tickets were sold by the volunteers, giving a boost to Laborfest efforts.



LEFT: What the State Fair crowd looked like to the volunteers. Running the booth the day of the visit were (left to right) Cindy Wade and Chris Wunder, both CWA Local 4603, and Judy Burnick, retired from OPEIU Local 35 and now active in the Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans, and Bonnie Greasby, on the executive board of WIARA. BELOW: the Harley on display at the fair.




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LABORFEST 2002

ABOVE: When the police band helped start the parade; when Midwest had hundreds of flight attendants (rather than the handful now left) fighting for jobs with a successful CHAOS campaign – such memories of Laborfest past and mementoes of Milwaukee labor's past will be worth browsing in special display areas September 7th. You are likely to find families and friends among the anniversary recollections.

Nostalgia mixes with new at Laborfest

RAFFLES FOR ALL AGES

The granddaddy of Laborfest raffle fever actually began at the State Fair and has continued - the sale of tickets (\$6 each or 2 for \$10) to win a Harley Davidson Dyna FXDF motorcycle. The bike and several cash prizes (the one raffle you don't have to be there in person to win) will be drawn toward the end of Laborfest on the Miller Stage. So buy a ticket before it's too late.

Around the grounds will also be the boxes for free raffles, for both children and adults. All visitors have to do is drop their names, clearly written, into the boxes, but you have to be there to win - the rule in free raffles. So stick around for the final drawing. Giveaways are for all ages -- there are raffles for children and for adults.

THE KIDS GET THEIR OWN FUN!

Laborfest is also an adult-supervised festival for children and families. Not only playground equipment and face-painting occur in the children's area, but also the stage features an afternoon of revolving performances.

- Among the act that delight children of all ages: Magician Glen Gerard.
- Ken Head's "Heads Up Juggling Revue."
- Matthew the Magician, alias Mathew Morgan.
- "Mom the Clown" & Company
- "The Pocket Lady" (Kathleen Mohr), providing stories and activities.

WRESTLERS WILL GET YOUR GOAT

Those exasperated by the artificial good and bad extremism of modern political debate will turn fondly to the pro-wrestling version of heroes and villains. Once again, to the delight of children (and apparently some women), the world of independent professional wrestling returns to Laborfest in a ring set up to the south of the children's area.

You can preview something of the performance at www.myspace.com/miaw_wrestling, the site with video

and photos provided by the Midwest Independent Association of Wrestling (MIAW). The four-minute video promotion, wouldn't you know, is to the tune of "Eye of the Tiger."

Sponsors have tipped Labor Press off to some of the participants in the afternoon series of matches, wrestlers with names that are not likely on their birth certificates:

Dysfunction, Angel Armani, Ryan Rogue and Justin Dread.

Also making his first appearance at Laborfest is a wrestler aptly named **Billy Goats**. He rams around dressed head to hoof in what is apparently his favorite animal, and we suspect his wrestling technique will be the butt of much amusement.

THERE ARE NO CLUNKERS HERE

One of the great traditions of Laborfest will have additional meaning this year -- the workmanship of legendary American-made cars, restored and polished with loving attention and seldom subjected to the strains of modern traffic.

In an era when older cars are largely fodder for "Cash for Clunkers," here are the classics that no owner would ever sell and whose artistry of manufacture is still something to envy.

Only pre-1989 American-made autos are allowed in the Cruise & Car Show. The masterpieces follow the Harley motorbikes in the parade, with the first 100 entries receiving special dashboard plaques. Then the cars are set up for display throughout Laborfest at the north end of the Henry Maier Festival Grounds (Summerfest).

Those cars participating in the parade should assemble between 9 and 10:45 a.m. between Wisconsin Avenue and Wells St. on 4th St.

LIVE MUSIC START TO FINISH

In the parade once again, on a flatbed provided by Operating Engineers Local 139, you'll hear the show

tunes provided by the professional musicians of Local 8, American Federation of Musicians. The truck will also carry actors and stagehands in what the entertainment unions call their MASH unit.

Starting at 11 a.m. on the Miller Stage two familiar live bands will kick off afternoon sets of dance music: Nightlife starts things off, followed by Spider George and the Web.

This is the fourth year for Nightlife, which started off under another name. Its several vocalists and instrumentalists are led by pianist David Brady.

Spider George and the Web has even been a longer draw at Laborfest, tirelessly rocking labor's house for years with its diverse range of oldies and a mighty brass section. It was formed back in the mid-1980s and is led by George Busateri.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Some of the most familiar and favorite vendors of Summerfest will be participating in Laborfest, but any food and drink tickets will be given out in advance by union locals.

For the second year there will be no food ticket booths. Vendors will directly accept both credit cards and cash. The experiment last year worked, freeing many labor volunteers from manning the booths and setting up a system of runners.

MAP OUT ALL ACTIVITIES

Our map on Page One conveys a lot of info. The free shuttle busses start around 8:30 a.m. The last one picks up stragglers at the end of the 11 a.m. parade. Park your car or bike for free at one of the designated lots (G, P and H) near Summerfest. If you're marching in the parade, get to Zeidler Union Square Park around 9:30 a.m. and find your local.

The bus planners are Amalgamated Transit Union Local 998 members, volunteering their services to Laborfest. Give them thanks as you get on board.

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More Laborfest Page 12, Map on Page 1



BELOW: Officers and staff were gathered for a group photo by the printing company for the souvenir booklet that will be ready by Laborfest. Top row from left: Mike Balistriere, Robin Lundgren, Jay Reinke and Lynnda Guyton. Bottom row, Willie D. Ellis (president), Cochran and Annie Wacker (vice president)



50-YEAR SPECIALS

Along with tent areas portraying memorabilia of Laborfest tradition, visitors can take home practical souvenirs of our 50th anniversary.

A special commemorative booklet has been printed up, stuffed with historical photos and essays about labor and the meaning of the 50th anniversary of the current labor council. The souvenir booklet will be used to illuminate the labor council to visitors and will also be given as a thank-you to the sponsors whose ads made the booklet possible.

Simultaneously, handsome shopping bags carrying the 50th anniversary logo and available in four colors -- black, green, blue and red -- have been created as a practical way to advertising your

Tons of advance planning go into Laborfest, all done by volunteers, either active union members or retirees. At left, Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran (front right) leads one of the planning sessions, which will continue up to the week before Laborfest.



TOP: At the Aug. 17 Laborfest planning session, volunteers were asked to display for the camera the newly arrived, union-made canvas bags bearing the logo (left) for the Milwaukee Area Labor Council's 50th anniversary. The bags and a souvenir booklet will be on sale during Laborfest.

YOU CAN HELP

Along with the All-City Parade event (Page 12) volunteers are needed to set up Laborfest at 4 p.m. Sunday, the afternoon ahead at the Summerfest grounds.

Each local is encouraged to pick a marshal for its parade activities. Folks are also sought to help tear Laborfest down -- in a positive way -- at 5 p.m. Monday. Call Robin at (414) 771-7070, robin@milwaukeeelabor.org.

labor allegiance while loading up the family groceries.

Those bags, with the souvenir booklet packed inside, will be sold at Laborfest for \$5.

The Harley motorcycle that will be won in the raffle will be on display throughout Laborfest. Buy two raffle tickets, bring your camera and the labor council will arrange for you to pose on the Harley bike before it's raffled off.

So win or lose, you can get the feel of being a Harley owner.

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Theater people, puppets join the parade

On Aug. 8, the skies washed away the cover story in the Shepherd Express. Rain did away with the elaborate plans for the All-City Parade and Pageant designed to celebrate the community's hopes and fears with dance, clown skills, various artisans and everyday people.

All those hand-crafted masks and puppets, giant or intricate, all the wacky costumes, offbeat marching bands and people-powered floats are not gone forever, though Mother Nature did force some repairs to papier-mâché and cardboard.

Even before the downpour, MALC's chief operating officer and Laborfest planner, Sheila Cochran, had visited the group's storage area and workspace - the Parade Space, 2210 W. Clybourn Ave. -- and was impressed.

This event's creators, Barbara Leigh and her Milwaukee Public Theatre, and Max Samson and his Milwaukee Mask and Puppet Theatre, are highly regarded Milwaukee theater veterans and activists on issues that dovetailed with Milwaukee organized labor.

She approached them about incorporating the leftovers from their Aug. 8 event into Laborfest.

Now there are no leftovers but a full meal.

So the groups got together and agreed to re-create the



parade that wasn't with the Laborfest parade that will be - rain or shine, with everyone praying for clear weather this time. The Laborfest tradition involves thousands of union members and more than 130 separate units. The Leigh-Samson event needs a couple of

hundred people.

But the agreement means finding new community volunteers since some people who cleared time Aug. 8 can't clear Sept. 7. Cochran is not only urging union members to help. Whole families are being invited to participate (children under 16 need to be with an adult).

It's not just muscular folks to manipulate the largest masks and puppets. There are also smaller puppets and lighter masks involved, along with creative workshops and preparations before the event. In fact, Leigh hopes to schedule a couple of advance rehearsals and there will be ongoing workshops before Sept. 7.

Being sought are people to push floats, dance, sing in a gospel choir, even walk on stilts (though that is rarely a requirement of union initiation). Also needed are people who can pretend to be villains, "potential victims" or heroes, which sound like role-playing any of us can do.

Leigh and Samson will gather their forces that Monday

near Zeidler Union Square Park, around which the Laborfest parade lines up and launches. Volunteers for the All-City Parade will get instructions at 9 a.m. along Everett St. just outside the Wisconsin Energies building, on the south side of Zeidler Union Square Park.

By 9:30 a.m. union marchers in the parade are expected to find the signage for their local and get organized. Various locations have been laid out along Michigan St. between 3rd and 4th Sts, even down Michigan toward 5th St. and then north of Wisconsin Ave on 4th St. for Harley motorcycles and vintage cars. So everyone's close to each other.

For the Leigh-Samson effort and needs, check in with stage manager Azeza Islam, (414) 349-5219, or email mptheatre2@gmail.com. Those parade elements will slide into the final sequence of the Laborfest union parade that starts promptly at 11 a.m.

But the show will continue about 1:30 p.m. in front of the

IT'S ONLY FITTING. Union people have been standing cheek to cardboard with Max Samson's puppets for decades. Most recently, AFSCME and AFT members at City Hall got some gigantic and animated help as they joined the KPOW organization to protest the idea of privatizing Milwaukee's water system for a century.

The puppets of Samson's theater company, along with the skits and creations of the Milwaukee Public Theatre, have often had similar causes with the labor community. Now they will occupy a special spot in the Laborfest parade. Volunteers are being sought from the labor community to help out with both the parade and a pageant in front of the Miller Stage.

Miller Stage at Summerfest when the special narrated pageant is presented. This half-hour event themed "Making a New Way-Together" emerged from a series of brainstorming sessions and focuses on the economy, ecology and neighborhood peace.

This unique element of Laborfest has an auspicious history. Milwaukee Public Theatre grew out of the Friends Mime Theatre in the 1970s and has presented hundreds of public theater events in Milwaukee.

Samson's inventive, enormous and tiny puppets have shown up not only at protests of which unions have been a part but also in various theater productions. His work for the activist community extends back for decades.

Photos of puppets and parade floats being created, a list of participants, and details on the background are at www.milwaukeepublictheatre.org.

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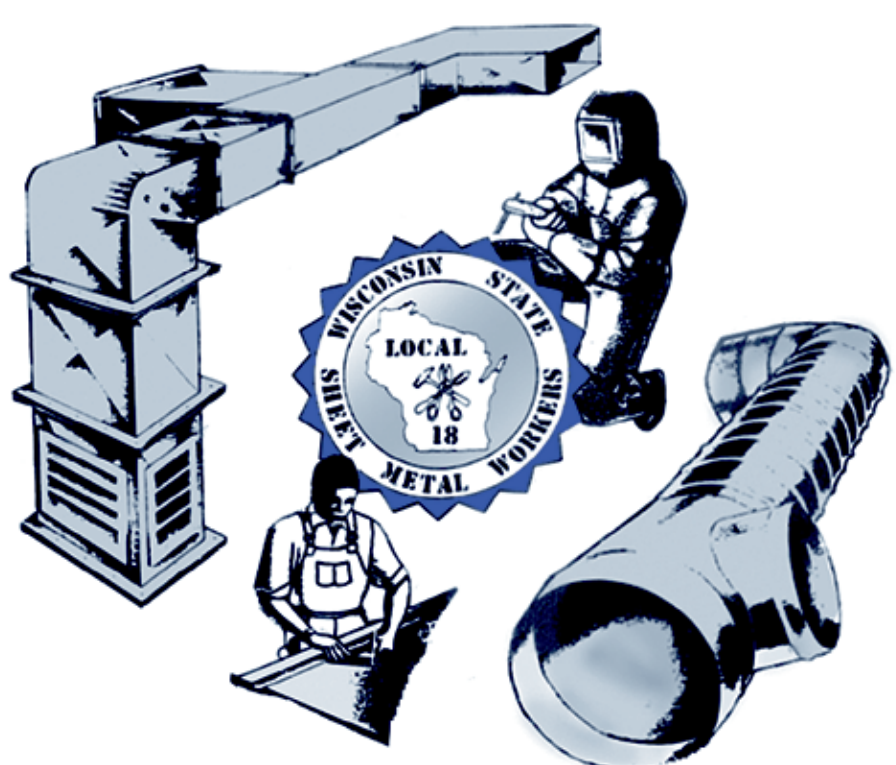


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Social Security experts participated in the July Resource Fair conducted by the Milwaukee Area Labor Council.

Tons using online tools

By Karyl Richson, Special to Labor Press

It's been only about a year since Social Security's Retirement Estimator went online, but you'd never know it based on the praise it continues to receive from users. It was rated the best online service in government by the University of Michigan's American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) for Federal Websites. And in the most recent ACSI report, the Retirement Estimator tied for first place with . . . guess what? Social Security's online application.

The Retirement Estimator is so popular, in fact, that people have visited the website more than three million times in the past year. You can visit, too, at www.socialsecurity.gov/estimator.

The estimator is a convenient, secure and quick financial planning tool that lets workers calculate how much they might expect to receive in Social Security benefits when they retire. The attractive feature is that it uses your earnings information on file at Social Security, without displaying your personal information. So you get an instant estimate of your future retirement benefits. And, it's so easy to use.

The estimator even gives you the opportunity to run personalized scenarios and "what if" situations. For example, you can change the date you expect to retire or change expected future earnings to create and compare different retirement options. This can help you as you plan ahead.

To use the Retirement Estimator, you must have enough Social Security credits to qualify for benefits and you must not be receiving benefits currently.

Experience the best online service in government now by visiting Social Security's Retirement Estimator at www.socialsecurity.gov/estimator. Then, once you've sketched out your retirement plans, you'll know where to go when the time comes to apply for benefits: www.socialsecurity.gov.

Karyl Richson, the Social Security public affairs specialist in Milwaukee, provides information in story form for the community.

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Pushing for \$10 in 2010

On July 24, millions of American workers found a few dollars more in their pockets when the federal minimum wage rose from \$6.55 to \$7.25 an hour. The national Let Justice Roll Living Wage Campaign will celebrate -- and call for another increase to \$10 in 2010.

Wait a minute. What gives? Is that the right move in hard times?

Absolutely. Long overdue. US society ignored the remedy for so long. Let Justice Roll insists we must catch up. It's not just that the best stimulus is a living wage. It's that it works. And it hurt all Americans when we didn't bring up the workers at the bottom.

The decade between 1997 and 2007 was the longest period in history without a minimum wage increase. Recent raises are so little, so late that even with the increase on July 24, workers will still make less than they did in 1956. Adjusting for inflation, it would take \$9.83 today to match the buying power of the minimum wage of 1968.

"The minimum wage was enacted during the Great Depression to put a floor under workers' wages and stimulate the economy," notes writer Holly Sklar, who is serving as senior policy adviser to the Let Justice Roll campaign. "We need that boost today."

Minimum wage workers are also consumers, much more likely to spend on what the US needs right now than high-priced executives who park their profits in offshore accounts. Minimum wage raises are well-targeted stimulus because they go directly to those who most need to spend additional dollars on food, fuel, rent and health care.

"A job should keep you out of poverty, not keep you in it," says Sklar.

"The long-term fall in worker buying power is

one reason we are in the worst economic crisis since the Depression," she adds. Her study of the economy has produced books like "Raising the Minimum Wage in Hard Times," which spells out the advantages. "\$10 in 2010 will foster a productive economy fueled by living wages rather than destructive debt and speculation."

If the common sense economic arguments don't move you, how about the moral ones?

"We need a wage ethic to go with our work ethic," says the Rev. Paul Sherry, executive director of Let Justice Roll. More than 600 faith leaders from all 50 states quickly endorsed Let Justice Roll's call for \$10 in 2010 minimum wage, along with 900 business owners and executives.

Sherry easily gets on an oratorical roll to describe the human underpinnings of the Let Justice Roll effort.

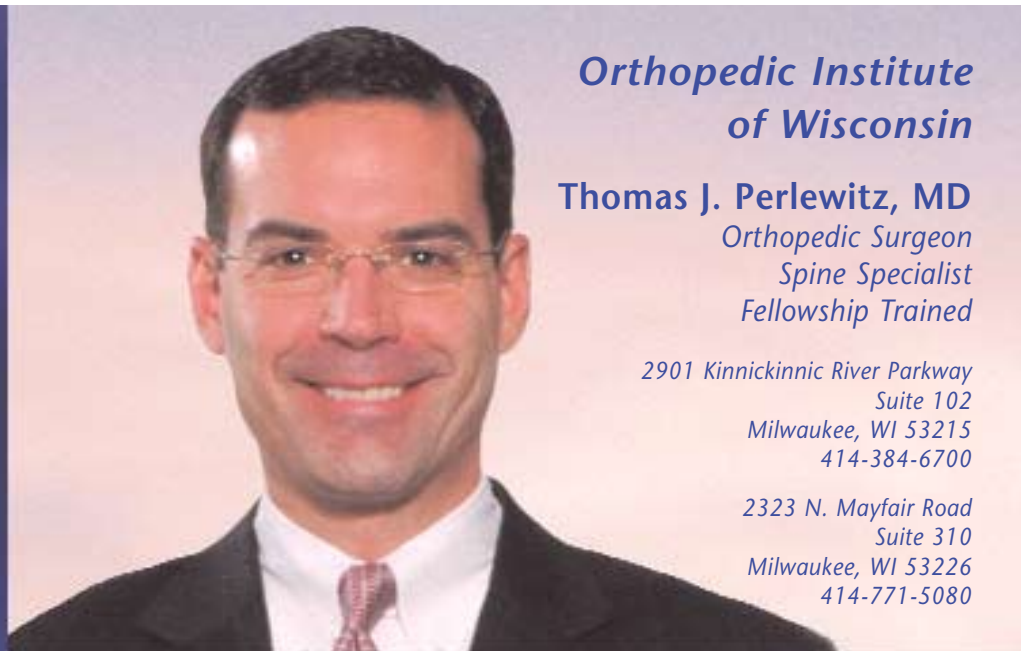
"It is immoral that the minimum wage does not cover the cost of basic human needs," he said. "A recession does not justify poverty wages to prop up a troubled economy."

Visit letjusticeroll.org to gather more facts and learn more about the campaign.

Grigsby to update senior women

State Rep. Tamara Grigsby will be the main speaker Wednesday afternoon September 2 when OWL, the Older Women's League, holds its meeting open to all starting at 12:30 p.m. at the Washington Park Senior Center, 4420 W. Vliet St.

Grigsby will explore pending legislation in the Wisconsin Senate and Assembly of concern to seniors. Also scheduled is a brief outline of national health care reform legislation from Billy Feitlinger of WIARA (Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans).



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Labor's year-long fight

Labor history is a living continuum and 2009 brought a year of fresh proof that the fight must go on to hold elected officials to their promises.

Milwaukee witnessed several campaigns, some unresolved, some frustrating in 2009. They were built around some basic principles - the hiring of local residents to keep wages in the community; the recognition that prevailing wage standards also benefit the local economy, and the realization that when the public supports such basic rights as a living wage, the politicians should do the same.

Here is a summary of a year's battles.

Building and construction trade unions were happy to see the downtown Hyatt, usually a union friendly hotel, get to work on millions of dollars in renovations. But then they learned that local unions were only getting scraps off the table and that the biggest work was going out of state to workers imported even from the South.

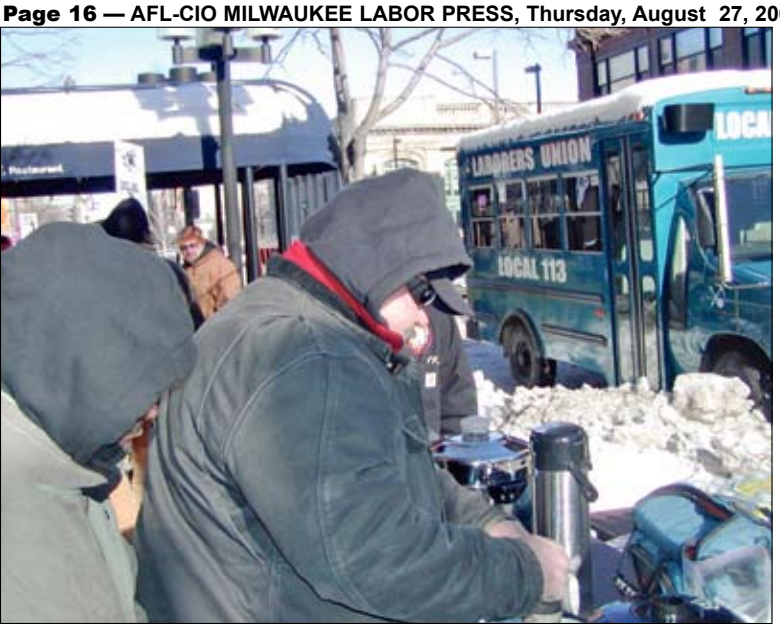

A series of protests began in the harsh days of winter. None of the elected officials who had opposed such practices when they needed labor votes to win election showed up. But many unions did, including the Midwest Airlines pilots of ALPA, despite the looming threat that came true. Most of

them lost their jobs through furloughing when Midwest was sold to Republic a few months later. Joining the informational picketing in the cold were such unions as the carpenters, the laborers and the painters. Hyatt management did not budge, particularly when the unions stood alone.

Similarly, throughout the spring and summer, it was hard to find a villain when local workers were also aced out of a project actually intended to help the local economy. Elected officials and unions were pleased when Milwaukee won in the Bush administration the go-ahead to build a Milwaukee Job

Continued Page 17

Frozen coffee from the Laborers Local 113 truck outside the Hyatt (top left) and informational picketing lines slogging through the January snow (left) were clearly less inviting than (below left) grilling out at Pere Marquette Park and marching in short-sleeve shirts around City Hall in June (below). But the enthusiasm and determination were similar for building and construction trades workers shut out of good jobs.

"We want more school houses and less jails; more books and less arsenals; more constant work and less crime; more leisure and less greed; more justice and less revenge; in fact more of the opportunities to cultivate our better natures..."
Samuel Gompers

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Even knowing their own jobs might soon be in jeopardy, Midwest Airlines pilots showed up in uniform in bitter cold to support the informational pickets at the Hyatt.



Temporary seating in the rotunda of City Hall (above left) was quickly filled this summer as a range of speakers (left) urged the city to support the overwhelming number of citizens who had helped pass the paid sick leave ordinance. Behind Sheila Cochran at the microphone you can spot leaders of 9to5 and new MPS board member Larry Miller. Above, cameras crowded into the mayor's office as petitioners urged the mayor to do the legally right thing and support the appeals process that will continue all summer in the state's courts. The issue remains unresolved.

From Previous Page

Corps center. But somehow, the rights to the project were finagled by the Bush Labor Department to allow a Wisconsin firm outside Milwaukee to leverage the rules. Again, building and trades workers here were angry that politicians hadn't stepped up, though the legal landscape was clearly difficult as a new administration took over. Still, in early summer, the Milwaukee Building & Construction Trades Council threw a cookout and rally in Pere Marquette Park and then marched on City Hall to register unhappiness.

Unhappy, too, were the nearly 70% of city of Milwaukee voters supporting paid sick leave as a rule for workers in the private sector, particularly since research indicated a positive effect on cities and even opponents agreed it was the right

See Page 8 for organized labor's historical struggle for recognition.

thing to do. Still, the voters praised for helping win the White House were ignored in the legal shuffle. While the fight goes on, the city is clearly squeamish about supporting the voters in the appeals process. This brought a summer of complaints to City Hall. An audience of union members, community groups and journalists heard a range of speakers, including Sheila Cochran, warn elected officials to step up to the plate. Meanwhile, TV and print cameras caught the petition presented to Mayor Tom Barrett at his office.

The appeal process goes on, and so does union determination to employ the community.



Safety issues dominate state conference

PROTECTING WORKERS BUILDING UNIONS
That's the theme for the Wisconsin AFL-CIO Health & Safety Conference being held Thursday and Friday, September 24-25, at the Wyndham Milwaukee Airport Hotel and Convention Center, 4747 S. Howell Avenue. The registration fee (\$80) includes lunch and refreshments. Registration is held from 7:30 to

9 a.m. Thursday, and the conference itself runs 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Thursday and 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Friday. Department of Labor and OSHA regional and area directors will be among the speakers. Already included are Sharon Simon, the director of safety and health training at the National Labor College, Neil DeClercq, director of the UW-Extension School for

Workers and James Schultz, executive director of WisCOSH. Other speakers and details of the extensive workshops are being worked out as this newspaper went to press. For more information on the unfolding workshops and special sessions, contact Jose Bucio of the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO, (414) 771-0700, extension 26, or solidarity@wisafclcio.org

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Merging to progress

Two of Milwaukee's most effective grassroots progressive organizations announced a merger in July.

Good Jobs and Livable Neighborhoods - known for its fight to bring community benefits to Park East projects and to make development projects provide local jobs by guiding successful passage through City Hall of the MORE jobs ordinance - is becoming part of the statewide Citizen Action of Wisconsin.

The missions dovetail, noted leaders of both groups, and both groups are close allies of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council.

Good Jobs (known as GJLN) pushes local hiring, local contracting and workers, family-supporting wages and sensible economic development in Milwaukee. Its most prominent advocate, recently honored by the MATC apprentice program for her efforts, is coordinator Pamela Fendt and its board is headed by John Jorgensen, business manager/secretary-treasurer for Painters and Allied Trades District Council 7.

Citizen Action is a coalition -- the state's largest -- on social, economic and environmental justice, deeply involved in promoting health care reform, open government and better taxation policies. One of its recent board presidents was Sheila Cochran, secretary-treasurer of MALC.

"It makes sense financially and programmatically," noted Jorgensen in the merger announcement. "We've put Milwaukee on the map with our work to establish local hiring, contracting, and wage standards for development projects that get

public dollars." GJLN leaders hope for expanded impact allied with a state group that shares vision and brings new resources.

For Citizen Action, the inclusion of what will be known as the GJLN Project continues its progressive outreach. For the near term, the GJLN Project will work for modernized economy and "stimulus investments" in the energy efficient arena.

GJLN is working in partnership with Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA) and the Sierra Club in an effort to connect disadvantaged residents to new jobs in weatherization and similar opportunities receiving recovery funds. This project is also supported by the Brico Fund, the Mission Fund of the Racine Dominicans, the New World Foundation, and the Wisconsin Community Fund.

The GJLN Project and Citizen Action will also continue partnership with Midwest Environmental Advocates and community, faith, and labor groups to develop citizen participation in redeveloping what is generally referred to by the city of Milwaukee planners as the 30th St. Industrial Corridor. Extending roughly from 27th St. west to 35 St. near Capitol Drive, this is generally known as the AO Smith/Tower Automotive area.

The city is proposing to spent \$33 million (and has already received some grants) to clean up and demolish structures, creating a tax incremental financing (TIF) district to pay for some of the costs and applying for state and federal grants in environmental remediation.



Fendt



LeRoy

But should the neighborhood be all new industry, -- and how will this industry support homes and retail development? GJLN has been conducting meetings on the desires and ideas of residents and is urging public officials to listen to these concerns. Supporters are also believers in community insight, all supported by a grant from the Helen Bader Foundation.

The existing GJLN Board will become a committee within Citizen Action of Wisconsin. But two of its best known activists had departed before the merger, as Fendt reported.

GJLN organizers Jennifer Epps and Todd Sprewer, both key to the MORE victory, have moved on to new opportunities. Jennifer is attending law school at UW Madison, and will be organizing for community justice in new ways following her graduation. Todd is furthering his community organizing skills in a placement with the Apprentice Organizers Project.

Tracking stimulus

A longtime ally and adviser on community benefits for GJLN and MALC is now making a bigger national name as a respected evaluator of how well all the states are doing, and reporting on that, with the federal stimulus (recovery) funds.

The group is Good Jobs First, a national clearinghouse for efforts at smart growth. Its detailed investigations are helping citizens figure out how their local governments are using the billions in federal funds to create and save jobs.

While Wisconsin has some ways to go it doesn't look bad at all in the detailed criteria established by the D.C. based nonprofit at www.goodjobsfirst.org.

Greg LeRoy, the nonprofit's leader who has spoken at Milwaukee events and advised some community development efforts here, explained the federal involvement and what his organization is doing to make sure that's happening, or to holler when it isn't.

Every state is supposed to provide and update the details on what federal recovery money it has received and how it is being spent, an innovation of transparency via the Internet that clearly has some bugs to work out. But making sense of the bugaboos is also important.

Good Jobs First stands as the reliable independent monitor - and adviser if the states will listen.

Each state is being rated by the group based on whether they include information on spending totals according to broad comprehensive categories -- geographical distribution of spending within the state, descriptions of specific projects, contract dollar amounts, the name of the contractor, data on jobs created by each recovery project and

where the project stands. There are 10 different criteria with each state graded on a scale of 0 to 100.

Each of these state sites is also supposed to link to the national recovery site, www.recovery.gov with an echoing name and model. For instance, the Wisconsin Office of Recovery and Reinvestment site is named www.recovery.wisconsin.gov.

Nationally out of the 50 states. Good Jobs First reported that Wisconsin ranked 8th, though a separate evaluation of its use of highway funds ranked 14th.

But why are so many states falling down on this job? As LeRoy noted in announcing the report, by failing to use "broadly available web tools, they are making it more difficult to measure the success of (the recovery act) in mitigating the effects of the recession."

Obama's vow may still exist, that "the Recovery Act will be carried out with an unprecedented level of transparency and accountability" - but clearly there are states not playing their part.

Wisconsin, the report suggests, is sure trying, but it received both hits and misses. Many visitors have praised its interactive map that details recovery funds and projects by project and county. The multiple flows of the federal money and multiple rules affecting decisions make some lags understandable - and Wisconsin has pressed state manpower into keeping up.

But here's the initial major flaw. There is no information on the state's site about the number of jobs that have been created or saved by the stimulus in Wisconsin, the report says. Some required information, such as the names of contractors, forces visitors to hunt other state-run sites.

Unlike Wisconsin, LeRoy noted, "most states" aren't effectively using online technology "to educate taxpayers about the impact of economic stimulus spending." The lack of detail makes it easier to demean the program even where it is successful, and also to applaud some projects where the facts have not yet been detailed.

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Nation's editor exposes Paul Ryan's 'sickness'

By Katrina vanden Heuvel
Special to Labor Press

In an interview conducted with Paul Ryan (while co-hosting a news program on MSNBC), the Wisconsin Congressman was combative as he wrongly dismissed Democratic proposals for health-care reform as "the government taking it over."

Ryan claimed he wants to get "everybody insured" and that his Patient's Choice Act would do just that -- giving people "the ability...to have a plan just like the one we have here in Congress."

It appears, however, that Ryan is just another conservative cog in what New York Times columnist Paul Krugman calls "a wall of misinformation."

Just check out the Center for

Trapshooting

After 17 weeks of shooting in the Milwaukee Area Labor Council league, here are the results by team, reflecting wins, losses and ties:

Class AA W-L-T

- 1. Pipers
- Plumbers Local 75.....11-4-2
- 2. 6 volts to lightning
- IBEW 494..... 9-5-3
- 3. Blind.....6-8-3
- 4. Wire & Fire
- CWA 4603.....3-12-2

Class A

- 1. Wirenuts
- IBEW 494.....16-1-0
- 2. Pipe Dopes
- Plumbers Local 75.....12-5-0
- 3. Team #2
- CWA 4603.....4-13-0
- 4. Sparkeys
- IBEW 494.....2-15-0

LEAGUE HIGH GUNS

John Kling	410
Ron Wahl	403
Scott Kruck	402
Jeff Jeske	398

*Submitted by
Ron Wahl, League Secretary*

Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) scathing report entitled *Coburn-Ryan Health Bill Would Jeopardize Coverage for Many, While Failing To Reduce the Number of Uninsured Significantly.*

Here's just some of the damage this bill would do:

- Fails to make coverage affordable for many low-income people while also eliminating Medicaid coverage for low-income children, parents, and seniors, pushing tens of millions of vulnerable people into the private insurance market.

LERA focuses on health care issues

The season of exploration of major issues for business, labor, academics and the mediation community will kick off with a timely focus on health care reform when the Wisconsin chapter of LERA offers monthly luncheons, speeches, mingling and Q&A at Alioto's, 3041 N. Mayfair Rd., Wauwatosa.

LERA is the Labor and

Feingold to Waukesha

Sen. Russ Feingold (D-Wis.) will be the special guest Wednesday, Sept. 2, at the Nelson Proxmire Dinner at Panos' Char House, 20290 Bluemound Rd., Brookfield.

A fund raiser for the revitalized Waukesha County Democratic Party, which has extended its influence and fielded successful candidates of late, the event honors two of Wisconsin's most storied senators of the recent past.

Registration starts at 5:30 p.m. and dinner (choice of three entrees) is at 6:30 (\$50 a ticket). Milwaukee labor delegates, who hold a conflicting monthly meeting at that time, are urged to encourage Waukesha colleagues to participate. Call (262) 679-3258 for more information.

vate insurance market.

- Would cause employers to drop coverage while failing to provide viable alternatives for people who lose that coverage.
- Allows insurers selling coverage through (optional) exchanges to charge higher premiums for sicker people and exclude coverage for pre-existing conditions for one year.

- Prohibits exchanges from placing any limit on premiums and cost-sharing amounts.
- Doesn't set meaningful minimum standards on benefits, or limit deductibles or out-of-pocket costs.

- The lack of market reforms means that tax credit and low-income subsidy "would almost certainly be insufficient to enable many people who are older, in poorer health, or have special health care needs to purchase affordable coverage."

- Low-income people could exhaust subsidy just to pay premiums.

- Low-income seniors eligible for both Medicaid and Medicare would face substantially higher costs because Medicaid would no longer pay their Medicare premiums and cost-sharing.

Employment Relations Association. Speakers are chosen through a representative advisory committee to take on important issues and developments.

Robert Kraig, a noted expert on health reform plans and a leader of Citizen Action of Wisconsin, will speak and take questions.

Registration is at 11:30 a.m., luncheon (with choices) is at noon, and the speaker will be at 12:30 p.m. Attendance is \$15 for LERA members and \$20 for non-members.

For more information and reservations contact Suzanne Clement at Suzanne.clement@nlrb.gov or (414) 297-3883.



Katrina vanden Heuvel

much to reduce the ranks of the uninsured and would make matters worse for many people who currently have coverage."

This might be a case of the health insurance industry getting what it pays for. The Center for Responsive Politics data indicates that the insurance industry is Ryan's top corporate campaign and PAC contributor: He received more than \$492,000 since he first ran in 1998, including more than \$210,000 in the 2007-08 and 2009-10 cycles.

Like Eric Cantor, Ryan (Wisconsin's District 1 Republican in the House) is hailed by the right-wing as a rising star in the GOP. It seems, however, that when all is said and done he offers only more of the same: A whole lot of talking points that mask cruel outcomes for millions of people in his state and across the nation.

Ryan and his conservative colleagues will be peddling this misinformation during the August recess -- which makes that the time to fight back.

The author, a frequent TV commentator and talk show guest, has been The Nation magazine's editor since 1995 and publisher since 2005. Her Editor's Cut blog is at www.thenation.com/blogs/ and is used with permission.

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Media

From Page 1

choices -- until they have to. Perhaps not even then.

This is why experts on both sides have long suggested that free market competition is no solution to most health care issues.

When the doctors whisper the name of the disease to you, it's 1929 again and you're looking for a window to jump out. You want relief now, comfort this instant. You will rage against anything that gets in the way, however pragmatic. If his name is Obama, so much the easier.

So the exploiters of fear have had a field day. And there is no acceptable answer when an opposition industry concocts ads about death and emails chain letters that lie about lies. The easiest defense of the status quo is to drown out dissent with sneers and yelling. If Obama support groups or unions then try to respond with campaigns of their own, they are labeled the fear-mongers. And on and on.

Interestingly, if you do find protesters who actually live in the district of the Congress member whose town hall they attended, as opposed to being driven in from Waukesha as a dozen were at Rep. Gwen Moore's health care forum Aug. 11, if you can get through the quarrelsome, rude and deliberately incoherent asides, you find a real passion and a curious fatality and futility.

The protesters admit "a few things" need reform. They have either not used the private health care system they say they admire or they have complaints about it.

Some will even admit there are no death panels in any bill, there are no cuts in Medicare benefits, there are no government bureaucrats who will take on the denial of service or dumping of high-risk citizens (the death panel role) that exists in the private insurance sector.

Yet they say, they still don't trust the president.

This is fascinating. A not-too-bright rich white Texan could speak of weapons of mass destruction, terrorists under every mattress, fairies at the bottom of the garden, and people believed him for years. A highly intelligent president who has made his early life an open book, speaks about nuances, discusses end-of-life issues for families, and (horrors!) shows empathy and sympathy is not to be believed because of what he might do in the distant future.

A lot of people see only one reason for so different a response: skin color.

Others in the media tried to analyze the behavior of the aging conservatives in the Senate, the gang of no. Few will discuss them as bluntly as I'm about to.

Their philosophy is not conservative but based on being out of power. This has led to embarrassing overstatements and prattle. They either know it's prattle or their advisers do: So they pretend Obama wants rationed care (as opposed to rational care); there are brain tumors that take months for surgery in Canada (turns out it was a cyst on the pituitary gland, non-life-threatening), there are lines for doctors in Ottawa (at least shorter than the lines in rural America!). There are, simply, examples stretched and hearsays that don't



Inside and outside North Division, this was the dominant message of hand-lettered signs, but somehow the television cameras largely missed them.

exist, and regular insults to foreign democracies (some more conservative than ours) in an effort to scare the bejesus out of citizens their own age.

While they are having their own senior moments on the Senate floor, they can't believe that a youthful, moderate-to-left president continues to insist they bring value to the debate and deserve our respect. His response understandably leaves them aghast. It is certainly more generous to their behavior than they would be.

In fairness, Obama is threading loudmouths on all sides. Conservative Democrats who sniff the wind and get the direction wrong (unlike real blue dogs).

And while there are nice things to say about the single payer system, storming meetings or congressional chambers to gain media attention is not one of them. Nor is the chant "Medicate for all" -- that's just a terribly oversimplified explana-

tion since any approach will require complexities and a struggle for consensus. At least the guy heading the team knows there is no magic bullet.

The intelligent members of the media probably also know that, but for profit in desperate times they become pawns of extremists.

Much of the actual debate has not benefited from corporate media coverage. The quality gains take place when both sides are prepared and open to discussion and no side artificially manages the news. That's when the media doesn't show up.

Elsewhere as here, they show up to help generate news, falling for the unreal and then reporting it as real.

Some in the media, for instance, suggested, that Moore's choice of North Division High kept away the truckloads of dissenters promised on conservative talk radio. Those truckloads didn't exist, of course, though they might have been wary about visiting 10th and Center,

www.milwaukeekeelabor.org which is the geographical heart of her district.

But the opposition knew that Moore did a fine job preparing for substance and welcoming on-topic debate. They didn't want that. Nor did the media covering the event, who kept combing the crowd for conflict.

Experienced crowd observers counted 700 or 750 attendees. Media in both camps escalated that to over 1,000. Factually, no more than 70 or so attendees were the rude and rowdy. (The media reported they yelled "Liar" at Moore, UW health professor Tom Oliver and the ministers onstage; but the media did not report the "Communist!" "Socialist!" and f-word expletives thrown out as frequently. Nor did they identify the interlopers though several are well-known to local journalists.)

By any rational account, the opponents were noisy but less than 10%. Yet those handfuls were the ones whose signs got the most time on television, which also reported the audience as "divided" (doesn't that require an "equal" sign?).

I spotted about 20 owners of small businesses in the crowd, most seeking to listen attentively. But in the hallway, the print media circled the two small business owners with the negative signs and attitudes.

Yes, there are real issues in health care reform, but spend any time watching the congressional town hall coverage from around the nation and wait in vain for the substance or balance.

It's human nature to gape at a traffic accident on the freeway, but it is bad journalism to be sidetracked by the magnet of bad behavior. Today's journalists seem to find that irresistible. If Moore's event had been a quiet, revealing debate on the issues, it would have drawn little coverage. Once people were there to yell and disturb, the journalists fell into the same trap that keeps talk radio alive (look at the numbers!), allowing conservative commentators to pretend they are the mainstream not the lunatic fringe.

Meanwhile, of course, the corporate media is losing money, disturbed that blogs and Internet sites rip off the news they work so hard to gather, perplexed that the public cannot discern the difference between quality journalism and mere twitter.

This August, however, the public had no reason to see much difference. Did they?

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STUDY IN CONTRASTS

The attentive listeners (left) tended to be upfront at Rep. Moore's health care forum, but journalists kept scurrying to the hallways or the back to find the handful of vocal nay-sayers. **RIGHT:** Reporters surrounded the two self-identified businessmen with negative signs while business people in the auditorium went ignored.



ABOVE: Young people with a clever and positive Juneteenth spin sat a few feet away from the woman with the view that health care reform would "kill" her mother (right). Somehow she made virtually every television and print coverage and they didn't. Also largely ignored were the signs of civility and support (left) and even the fans of the public option took a backseat to news coverage about such falsehoods as euthanasia.



TOP: A volunteer security force wearing vests that glowed in the dark helped things stay smooth. They were mostly from such unions as UFCW and Laborers – and unfailingly cheerful. "We're here to let critics speak and not let anyone get out of hand," one said in explaining their mission. **JUST ABOVE:** Anxious but pleased with how smoothly the event went and the praise his facility received was North Division's new principal, Jeff Gaddis. **RIGHT:** Volunteers signed hundreds in at tables outside the auditorium.




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Still a touch of the snaky to COBRA

Action to reduce the cost of COBRA health coverage doesn't mean the health protection is cheap, particularly for those who have lost their jobs.

The lack of affordable health care is especially acute among the US ranks of unemployed, which has slowed mightily as the recession ebbs but is still devastating.

Thanks to the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1986 (COBRA), workers who are laid off from their jobs may keep their employer-sponsored insurance -- at their own expense -- for up to 18 months.

But without additional federal supports, these COBRA costs would easily consume the bulk of an individual's unemployment benefits, figures from the Department of Labor (DOL) and nonprofit research institutes

confirm.

The DOL reports that average weekly unemployment benefits (including the additional \$25 per week added as part of the economic recovery package) were \$330 in June, which translates into an average monthly benefit of \$1,432.

The Kaiser Family Foundation reports that, in 2008, the average monthly health care premium for a family was \$1,057.

An average unemployed person would be spending a hefty 74% of his or her unemployment insurance on premiums for a family health plan, not including the deductibles or co-pays for prescriptions or doctor and hospital visits.

For low-income families, it is quite possible their health care costs actually exceed their unemployment benefits.

In stepped a new administration. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act enacted by Congress and President Obama early this year was intended to ease this burden by subsidizing 65% of individuals' COBRA costs for up to nine months. This is, however, a temporary measure during widespread long-term unemployment. Millions of workers will be unemployed for longer than nine months, so COBRA is a bridge but health care reform becomes even more essential for them.

Even with the 65% subsidy, COBRA costs are still quite high because of the current pricing of private insurance:

The subsidy brings the average family health care premium down to \$370 per month, or 26% of the average monthly unemployment benefit.

College project honors Sweeney

One of AFL-CIO President John Sweeney's priorities as labor leader has been to build and strengthen the union movement by educating workers so they can meet the challenges ahead. Now, Sweeney's efforts will carry on after he retires in September.

During a gala celebration of the 40th anniversary of the National Labor College July 28, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka announced the creation of the John Sweeney Leadership Institute, which opens this fall at the Labor College.

Trumka, the only announced candidate for Sweeney's seat, says the institute will foster the next generation of union activists and leaders.

Goodness knows we need them now more than ever for the tough battles ahead.

Participants will take a




John Sweeney

series of four, weeklong trainings over the course of one year. The program is designed for rising leaders and activists. Each participant will be placed with a more experienced mentor.

Sweeney, who spearheaded creation of the Labor College, told the crowd: "The greatest honor of all has been representing working families and our unions as my life's work."

"While I'll be stepping down as president of the AFL-CIO, I plan to stay in the fight as a 'union warrior at-large.'"



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Didn't we win? So let's seize our moment

By David Newby
Special to Labor Press

Last year we organized the largest, most intense and most effective political mobilization that any of us have ever seen. Labor went all out to communicate to our members and their families about the issues and what was at stake.

And we won!

But we didn't do all that work just for the fun of it: we did it so that we could improve the lives of working families. So now we must seize the time and turn America around so that the economy and our political system work for US -- not just Wall Street and the corporate elite.

The reality is that we have the best chance in sixty years to make real advances for working people: to guarantee that every American gets quality, affordable health care at a cost they can



David Newby

afford; to change our labor laws so that workers can organize a union if they want one -- without harassment, intimidation, or fear of being fired; to re-shape our economy so that it improves our standard of living, our quality of

Comment

life, and so that it provides security to all in the basics of life.

Those are the opportunities we have today -- if we seize the time, if we act to insist that the politicians we elected to office come through on the promises they made.

But as I write this, we face an additional challenge: right-wing, corporate sponsored- and-financed efforts to sabotage our attempt to improve the lives of Americans. Responsible members of Congress who are taking their August recess period to hold town hall meetings in order to be accessible to their constituents, to listen to their concerns, to respond, and to let us know what is happening in Washington --these representatives we elected are being shut up and shouted down by people duped into believing the most outrageous lies imaginable.

Take the Democratic health care proposal (which isn't even finished yet): the town hall disrupters are echoing the most ridiculous charges of the Fox right-wing "commentators," anonymous email chain letters, and the likes of Glenn Beck and Rush Limbaugh. These disrupters are shouting lies that the

Democrats (and President Obama) are promoting euthanasia for our senior citizens, requiring forced abortions, giving bureaucrats in Washington the power to make medical decisions for us, and insisting that health care reform is "socialized medicine." All lies. But these lies repeated over and over make other folks wonder if they might be true.

In almost every one of these town hall meetings, someone will yell against a "government takeover" of the health care system -- and add, too, that "you better keep your hands off my Medicare!" Medicare, of course, the largest, most successful, and most popular government health care system we have.

Against this ignorance and deliberate sabotage by corporate special interests, we need to stand up and speak up. We must demand that the lying end and that our politicians act in our interests. If they don't act now, both what remains of our health care system and our economy will collapse under the weight of unsustainable increases in the cost of even the most basic

health care. During last year's election campaign we demanded that politicians support OUR issues, union issues, in other words, the issues of the American people.

We demanded, we organized -- and we won.

Now it is time for us to make our voices heard that we want action that benefits American working families. We need to make sure that our friends in Congress know they still have our support as long as they still support us. We need to make it clear that neither the disrupters nor the corporate manipulators speak for hard-working, ordinary Americans who are fighting for a decent life and guarantees that they and their families will not lack the basic needs of life even in hard times.

Now is the time we must organize and speak up: clearly and loudly and with conviction. We won't have another opportunity for many, many years.

Seize the time.

The author is president of the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO.

Iraq unions backed here

In a resolution being submitted to the national AFL-CIO convention in Pittsburgh in September, the Wisconsin AFL-CIO is calling on US labor to support labor rights in Iraq.

President David Newby will submit the resolution, which echoes proposals from several labor groups and federations across the nation, including US Labor Against the War (USLAW).

All these groups are concerned that the attention to removing America's troops from Iraqi cities and returning authority to the Iraqi government has allowed the continuation of Saddam Hussein's anti-labor laws and ignored the concerns of Iraqi oil workers and others at the lucrative giveaways of oil fields to foreign companies.

The Wisconsin resolution points out that the US has paid an enormous price without assurances that Iraqi citizens will be truly free. "After more than six years of military occupation, more than 4,300 US and as many as a million or more Iraqi lives have been lost and our government has spent nearly \$650 billion of taxpayer funds on the military occupation of Iraq . . . real democracy in Iraq still remains more of an aspiration than reality;" the resolution notes.

It asks the US to press the Iraqi government in::

- Respecting the right of free association and other worker rights defined by International Labor Organization conventions;
- Ceasing all repression of Iraqi unions and activists;
- Releasing union funds and assets frozen or impounded and permitting unions to operate normally;

Directing public enterprises to recognize and bargain with unions freely chosen by their employees (something blocked by Saddam's laws);

Promptly adopting a basic labor law that enshrines these rights and obligations in the legal code of Iraq.

The Iraqi Constitution actually outlines the adoption of such labor laws, but it hasn't happened.

The oil unions have long protested working conditions including pay and housing.

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