

Season's Greetings

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Holiday Edition

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US Census expects this logo to become familiar quickly

The 2010 countdown to counting us all

By Dominique Paul Noth, Labor Press Editor

Comprehensive, confidential and vital to representation in our democracy and the allocation of a staggering \$400 billion in federal funds, the 2010 US Census is upon us.

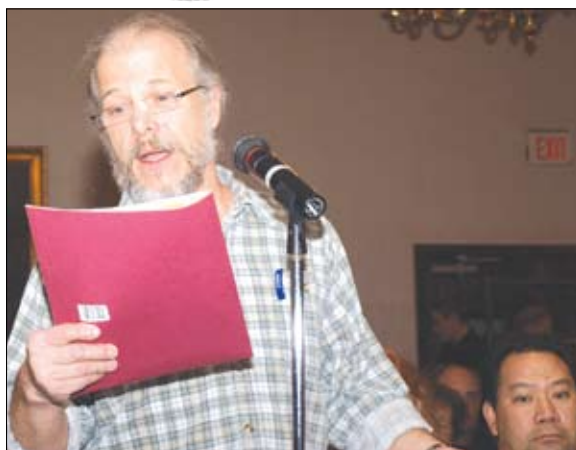
Media and public officials have already met to be educated and get to work. Volunteers are being hired at \$15 an hour to help federal officials and hired agencies provide telephone assistance and backtracking to support the nationwide US mailings to households that begin in March.

In October the city of Milwaukee held special sessions for the print and electronic media featuring US Census leaders from both D.C. and Chicago. It has also launched its own website, www.milwaukee.gov/2010census, to support the national effort and formed a community-wide Complete Count Committee led by Mayor Tom Barrett and Common Council President Willie Hines to assure the public of the confidentiality and importance of the mission.

Since these last October meetings, what has unfolded is a remarkably detailed campaign. It can't provide every answer the public has but can knock down myths and explain a detailed procedure and how it will be publicized.

The primary emphasis is absolute confidentiality of the information along with the importance of being thorough and detailed. The officials have doubly-emphasized this. "Our first goal is to remove barriers - and perceived barriers - that may keep an individual from

Census continued Page 6



Rage boiled in delegate Gerry Gunderson over the health system's role in the death of a friend while retired nurse Vivian DeBeck pleaded that anger just played into the hands of those opposing reform in a fascinating exploration of the need and pain behind the bills moving through Congress.

For the full taste of the testimonials, see Pages 12-14.

Heeding the human cost

By Dominique Paul Noth
Labor Press Editor

The stories were gut-wrenching and heart-breaking - patients spurred into death by corporate denial of cancer treatment, physicians dealing with cardiac surgery when the patient had stopped insulin treatment for lack of money, bureaucrats who issued cold-blooded refusals without knowing their own Badger Care options, students forced out of school by illness and immediately dropped from family coverage, mothers choosing between basic food and life-saving drugs.

The particularly frightening truth is that these stories are typical, not invented. If anything they have become standard in the world's leading industrial nation that boasts that five out of six are



The testimonials were sadly familiar to panelists such as Rep. Sandy Pasch, but still touched the heart.

covered by employer supported health insurance - only to see how quickly that protection can vanish if they get sick.

These were not special cases dragged to the microphone at Serb Hall for a union forum Dec. 2. The expert panel was deeply moved, but it was by variations

of tales that had tortured them in a year of debate. "Everyone in the room can tell you about this," said one. Representatives of elected leaders said simply: "This is what we have been hearing every day for a year" - and ironically, the very people who oppose the Democrats' efforts to reform health care take the officials aside and relate similar horror stories.

"This is my daily nightmare," said Dr. Frederick DeBoe, a primary care physician with Aurora who recounted how just that morning in his office he had faced four cases similar to those he had just heard about at Serb Hall -- no money, no treatment options and no help in the system.

"I thought the writing was on the wall 27 years ago when I

Forum continued Page 15

Trades prep for hard winter

Reports, Commentary by Dominique Paul Noth

In the last fall of the Bush administration, leaders of the buildings and trades unions were warning that the blue skies of late 2007 and early 2008 were heading into a snowstorm of tight credit, fallow building and freeway construction, layoffs affecting all workers, runaway health costs and the inevitable results of years of spending on credit without saving or putting away for the future.

Of course they were right. The indifference to the fate of the American workers -- whose productivity had actually kept all these bad policies afloat -- was about to be exposed. So even a year ago, in spite of the euphoria of finally winning the White House, the brightest elves were already laying goodies away for a hard future.

By October of 2009, 10 months after something was finally done in D.C. to begin the slow painful process of reversal, construction jobs nationally had

fallen by 1.1 million from a year before.

In Wisconsin the figures are somewhat better - some 113,700 construction jobs in play this October. If you only compare to one year ago, the numbers are only a few thousand lost, but that's misleading. Don't fool yourself. There are enough dark clouds without fudging with the white chocolate.

Lyle Balistreri, president of the Milwaukee Building & Construction Trades Council, AFL-CIO, flatly predicts that this will be the worst winter for construction work in his memory, and he goes back

Climbing Back Up

Page 9

Creating New Industries

Page 11

Fighting Myths

Page 10

Trades continued Page 8

Military spending meets domestic necessities

By Robert Pollin, MinuteMan Media

The US government spent an estimated \$624 billion on the military last year. This amounts to about \$2,000 for every resident of our country. It's also roughly equal to the combined military budgets for all of the rest of the world's governments. And it's about eight times US federal spending on education.

It's regularly claimed that the military budget is a cornerstone of the economy -- that the Pentagon is both a major underwriter of important technical innovations as well as a source of millions of decent jobs. At one level, these claims have to be true. When the government spends in excess of \$600 billion per year of taxpayers' money on anything, it's got to generate millions of jobs. Similarly, when the government spends a large share of that budget on maintaining and strengthening the most powerful military force in the history of the world, it cannot fail to encourage technical innovations that are somehow connected to the instruments of warfare.

Why will investments devoted to clean energy, health care, and education generate between 50 to 150% more jobs per dollar than spending on the military?

• More spending on people, less on machines and supplies. Weatherizing homes requires relatively few machines and supplies but many construction workers.

• More money stays within the US economy. US military personnel spend only about 43% of their income on domestic goods and services, while the US population overall spends an average of 83% of their income on domestic products and 17% on imports.

The largest increases in the military budget during George W. Bush's presidency were associated with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. What if President Obama were to keep his campaign pledge to end the Iraq War, and transfer all of the roughly \$150 billion we are now spending there on clean energy and education in equal amounts?

The result would be a net increase of 1.8 million jobs throughout the US. This wouldn't solve our unemployment crisis by itself. But it would go a long way toward meeting the needs for decent jobs, good education, a clean-energy economy, and a more peaceful world.

The author is a professor of economics and co-director of the Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. See www.fpij.org/pdf/0910Jobs_report1.pdf



Sachin Chheda

Chheda elected to head Democrats

A familiar speaker and advocate for fair trade policy was elected in December as Milwaukee's new chairman of the Democratic Party. Sachin Chheda, also a noted lobbyist for social causes and political activist issues, didn't mention his new honor Dec. 2 when he urged delegates to write the governor and the president in support of fair trade policies, which are being threatened by new lobbying pushes for free trade agreements by the World Trade Organization.

Chheda, a partner in the nonprofit Nation Consulting, also spent five years working for Gov. Jim Doyle, back to his first election as governor. He was supported in his campaign by the outgoing Democratic Party chairman, Martha Love, a familiar presence to union members who will continue in other roles for the political organization and the community.



KEN HOWARD, once familiar star of "White Shadow" and in recent years a regular guest on TV series and in movies, will take the place of Alan Rosenberg, a regular on "The Guardian" and other TV shows, on the AFL-CIO executive council. Both represent the Screen Actors Guild. Howard is currently the SAG president.

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Women marching toward union majority

It's one more change shaking up labor

Among all the changes that will affect the future of the US economy, don't neglect what is happening within organized labor - a profound steady shift in the makeup of membership likely to be spurred by a new effort to bring young people and small workforces into union activism.

A major new study from the Center for Economic and Policy Research underlies those changes and has made headlines about some notable demographic shifts underway

The most obvious: Within the next 10 years: Women will become the majority of unionized workers. They are already at 45%,

The power of that alone is profound, labor analysts say, suggesting that a number of issues important to women will grow into dominance in the near

Nurses merging for union power

In confirmation that more of the nation's nurses are banding for union power, three groups at a convention in Phoenix on December 8 agreed to push together on key issues.

The 150,000-member National Nurses United will be the largest union for registered nurses, combining the California Nurses Association, 83,000 members in several states, the Massachusetts Nurses Union, 23,000 members, and the Midwest-centered 45,000 members of United American Nurses.

future. Not just general health care for families. "When you have a majority of women in the labor movement, issues like work-family balance, paid sick days and paid parental leave become more important," said John Schmitt, an economist at the center.

In 1983, women were just 35% of union membership. They will move into the majority by 2020 under current trends. White men now make up 38% of the union work force, down from 51.7% in 1983.

Latinos are the fastest-growing ethnic group in organized labor, more than doubling their representation from 5.8% to 12.2% over the past 25 years. Asian workers also saw their union ranks swell from 2.5% in 1989 to 4.6% in 2008.

Blacks represent 13% of the unionized work force, a percentage that has remained steady for 25 years. But the lack of growth in unionization of blacks was seen as a troubling factor. First it emphasizes how Latinos and other minorities actually represent a bigger pool today in unions than blacks do.

It is also a reminder of culture division in society, where blacks were once seen as a unified economic bloc. Whatever gains African Americans have made over the past quarter century are clearly limited by stubborn unemployment rates and the apparent growing divide between affluent blacks and the more struggling families. During the last quarter century, the unionization rate for blacks has fallen

steeply, from 31.7% percent in 1983, yet in that time unions have gained as a whole in levels of education and income for their members.

Also revealed in the study was that union ranks have grown very slightly over the past two years.

Union members now represent 12.4% of the nation's work force, though that is down from about 20% in 1983. One of the bright spots in union gains was the Pacific states, which is somewhat ironic since the report also cites globalization and the threat to take jobs overseas as one of the impediments to union growth. A number of workers in the West have fought back by unionizing.

The study found that just one in 10 union members today are in manufacturing -- another unsettling shift.

And no surprise, since the public sector seems more open to women workers than the private sector, much of the union growth has come from the public sector. Women make up a greater percentage of employees there than

in private industry. About 49% of all unionized workers are government employees and 61% of unionized women come from the public sector.

According to the study, "The Changing Face of Labor, 1983-2008," for the first time since the National Labor Relations Act was passed in 1935, the percentage of factory workers who are in unions, 11.4%, has fallen below the percentage of all workers who are in unions. Unions at 12.4% of the US workforce represent a fall from 35% in the 1950s. The membership of the UAW alone has fallen to less than 500,000, from 1.5 million in 1979.

As Steven Greenhouse noted in his New York Times report, "Many labor leaders argue that for unions to reverse their long-term decline, labor will need to win passage of federal legislation to make it easier to organize workers. And many labor leaders say that public-sector unions, like those representing teachers and municipal employees, which have grown rapidly in recent decades, should do more to back

unionization efforts in the private sector."

Some other noteworthy changes in the study: 38% of union members had a four-year college degree or more, up from 20% in 1983. Just under half of female union members have at least a four-year degree, compared with 27.7% for half of male union members.

The typical union member is 45 years old, compared with 41 for the typical American worker. The age for both the typical union member and the typical worker is seven years older than a quarter-century ago.

The most heavily unionized group was workers age 55 to 64 - 18.4% of them were in unions. The least unionized age group was 16- to 24-year-olds (5.7% were in unions), a demographic that emphasizes the urgent call by AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka for unions to recruit younger members and promote the union advantage to fresh groups of workers that previously had not been targets of organizing.

-- Labor Press, and AFL-CIO



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Steward Training
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Labor History through Film: Labor in the World Today
April 15 - May 6, Thursdays, 5:30 - 8:00 p.m.
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Grievance Arbitration, June 7-10	

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The winning case for fair trade

By Richard Trumka

Special for Labor Press

To our nation's peril, the free trade orthodoxy continues to ignore a fundamental economic fact: It matters where things are made.

Over the past decade, the US industrial base has suffered an unprecedented decline. The loss of more than 5 million manufacturing jobs and the closure of over 50,000 manufacturing facilities have undermined our technical capacity to innovate and to make things, while decimating our middle class.

Flawed trade and tax policies and a financial system focused on short-term profits drove good jobs offshore, led to record trade deficits, and left the economy in ruins. With the manufacturing share of the nation's gross domestic profit (GDP) withering to 12% (from 15.9% in 1995) and the financial sector growing to 22%, the structure of the economy looks more like Monaco than Germany. This growth model of asset bubbles, low wages, credit pyramids, toxic assets and unregulated, out-of-control global capital has been a recipe for disaster.

There is a reason every



Richard Trumka

other developed and advanced developing nation has a manufacturing strategy. Most governments see it as key to long-term growth, and they target investment in technology. In contrast, the US government abandoned strategy to market forces and left workers and communities hanging without a safety net.

There was a time this nation thought big --- investing in its people, infrastructure, technology and manufacturing. We must do so again but we need to recognize that the world has changed. For example, the rest of the world leads in mass transit technology and the United States is home to only two of the 10 largest solar photo-voltaic producers, only one of the top 10 advanced battery manufacturers and only two of the top 10 wind turbine producers.

Over the next decade our nation is poised to invest \$2 trillion in health care, infrastructure and a greener economy. If we want to be world leaders in clean technology and have transportation systems to match, then we must think strategically and at scale.

Governments must restructure and regulate financial systems so that long-term investment is rewarded and gambling is not subsidized.

We must use our financial resources to develop and deploy domestically-produced technology and, if there is better technology overseas, use our financial leverage to get those production systems located here.

We must think strategically and regionally about industry development so we utilize existing pools of displaced skilled workers, engineering talent and idled plants.

And, finally, we must never again lose sight of the fact that it matters where things are made.

Excerpted from remarks made by the new president of the National AFL-CIO at "Building the New Economy," a major conference in Washington, D.C.



Fully reported on Pages 12-15, the labor council health forum Dec. 2 was also an exercise in quick clean logistics. Personal stories were easy to find but an attentive thoughtful panel took effort to assemble. Preparing them for the session were moderator Sheila Cochran at the podium and, to her right, Vice-President Annie Wacker, the chief organizer. Visible on this side of the panel were (left to right) JoAnn Anton of Sen. Kohl's office, retired nurse Vivian DeBeck and Aurora primary care physician Dr. Frederick DeBoe.

Laborers Hall will host Saturday party for Dr. King

Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran will be the key speaker at the historic celebration honoring Martin Luther King Jr. hosted by United Auto Workers Locals 469 and 9 (the Brewery Workers) and the union's Civil and Human Rights Committee.

Free admission, refreshments and entertainment will be part of labor's premier celebration of the late Dr. King, held from 6-8 p.m. Saturday (doors open 5 p.m.) at Laborers Local 113 Hall, 6310 W. Appleton Ave.

It is also an advance celebration of the national King Holiday (held Jan. 18) and the event will also support the efforts of Riverside High students to tour black colleges and universities.


Other sponsors along with the UAW are the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, where Cochran serves as chief financial officer, Laborers Local 113

and the Milwaukee chapters of APRI and CBTU.

For more information contact the event's chair, West Renfro at (414) 447-5540.



UAW chair Wes Renfro spoke at the 2009 King celebration held at Washington Park Senior Center.



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City voters pioneered for families

City of Milwaukee voters were right - some 70% of them - in November 2008 when they voted for a minimum of paid sick days.

But that was not just the message of 9to5, which is fighting for the ordinance in court despite opposition by the business community and refusal by Mayor Tom Barrett to have the city help support it.

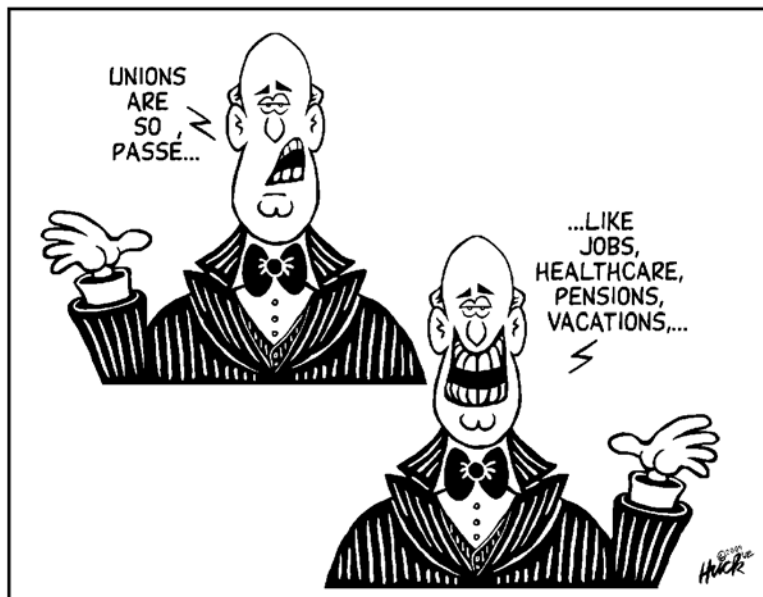
The message has been spreading across the land. And where once Milwaukee could have been the pioneer blazing the trail, it is proving a year later an also-ran.

Now the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) had added its chorus, before Congress in hearings held Nov. 17.

The CDC estimated that one worker sick with the H1N1 (swine flu) virus will infect one in 10 co-workers if he or she goes to work while infected with the virus. Even more frightening, another recent study predicted that 63% of Americans will be infected with the virus by the end of December.

Family advocates and health care professionals told the House Education and Labor Committee that, along with vaccinations, and good hygiene practices, the best way to protect workers and slow the spread of the H1N1 virus is through guaranteed paid sick leave legislation, such as the Healthy Families Act, which would set nationally what Milwaukee voters wanted the city to pioneer.

The CDC's guidelines to employers and workers to slow



the spread of the virus says workers who suspect they have the swine flu or another influenza-like illness should stay home and employers should allow workers to stay home "without fear of reprisals or...losing their jobs."

But nearly half of all private-sector workers - and 76% of low-income workers - have no paid sick leave.

That leaves sick workers facing the dilemma of staying home and losing several days of pay or likely spreading the disease to fellow workers and the public. Many low-wage workers have jobs that have direct contact with the public, such as the food-service and hospitality industry, schools and health care.

Says Debra Ness, president of the National Partnership for Women and Families: "Congress should waste no time in passing paid sick days legislation so that working people can earn paid time off and help prevent the

spread of illnesses, without jeopardizing their economic security."

Dr. Georges C. Benjamin, executive director of the American Public Health Association, says paid sick leave benefits employers, workers and their families along with customers and the general public.

For employers, Benjamin says: "Sick workers are not productive ones and by spreading disease in the workplace risk the overall productivity of the business. By providing paid leave for sick workers, worker safety and business productivity can both be enhanced -- a win-win for employers."

While everyone wants to

encourage workers to make healthy and rational decisions, family concerns can get in the way of such sense. When they are faced with the choice of staying home sick without pay or going into work sick so they can put food on the table and pay their mortgage, many workers choose to go to work and "tough it out," putting their co-workers and their customers at risk, the testimony pointed out.

Let's face some simple facts:

When you're struggling to make ends meet, you're going to do everything possible to not miss a day's pay. The lack of paid sick leave encourages workers who may have H1N1 to hide their symptoms and come to work sick -- spreading infection to co-workers, customers and the public. This isn't good for our nation's public health or for businesses.

The Healthy Families Act would require businesses with more than 15 employees to provide workers with up to seven paid sick days a year to care for themselves or a sick child or spouse.

At a similar Senate hearing, Deputy Secretary of Labor Seth Harris announced the Obama administration's support for the Healthy Families Act.

Labor League Bowling

MALC MIXED SENIOR BOWLING

NOVEMBER 2009 RESULTS

TEAM	WINS	LOSSES
SLAMMERS	48	29
1 BOARD OVER	44	33
PIN PALS	44	33
8 BALLS	36	41
GUTTER RATS	31	46
CRAZY 8'S	28	49

IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 475

DAN LAACK	578
DON WIEDMANN	557
JESSE CORTEZ	509
DEL GROSS	509
GENE HERRICK	501
BOB WAGNER	496
DAN KNIPPEL	489

IND. HIGH GAME OVER 175

DAN LAACK	222
DON WIEDMANN	215
DEL GROSS	204
JESSE CORTEZ	204
BOB WAGNER	186
GENE HERRICK	176

IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 444

JOYCE KNIPPEL	512
RAE MATOWSKI	457
PHYLLIS NAVARRETE	448

IND. HIGH GAME OVER 135

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RAE MATOWSKI	165
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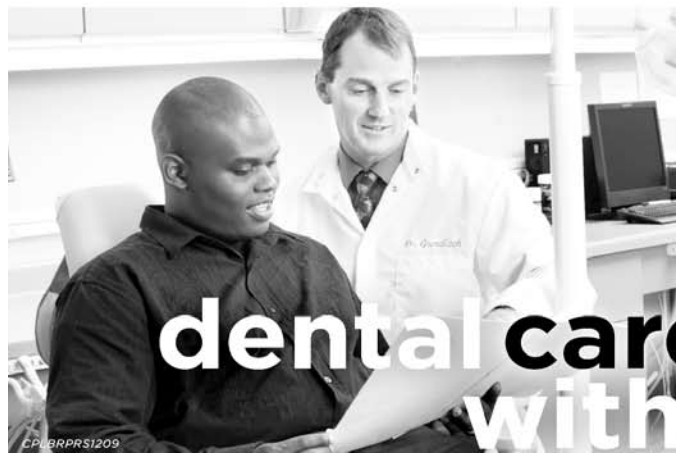
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Census

From Page 1

returning their 2010 Census questionnaire," said Barrett. "First and foremost, residents must know that all census information is strictly confidential . . . and may not be shared with other government agencies."

The goal is a complete official count of the population of the United States. As Hines noted, in Milwaukee that is additionally critical as census data determines funding for public safety, community and economic development, and other city programs.

A complete count means everyone - by household, regardless of age, citizenship, etc. To that end the US Census Bureau has prepared the ground with experts in 59 languages and expects to hire a massive million part-time employees to support the process.

It has created its own special logo, an interactive website with some astonishing information and entertainment and a combination of nationwide and localized presence, all on a very specific (some would say tight) budget and monitored expenses.

So this may not be a media buy to rival Wal-Mart or Burger King but you are likely to see, hear and read it -- mailings, posters and website but also paid ads in print, radio, TV and Internet centers, along with stories like this one, with journalists helping to explain the range and importance of the 2010 census and help target some of the most traditionally difficult groups to reach and reassure that it is safe and important to participate.

The media is also being encouraged to allay suspicions in a campaign that has had almost as many deceptions built up around it as discussions of taxes and health care.

For instance, there is no basis in reality to rumors circulating the Internet that participants must supply Social Security numbers or be US citizens, no reality to assertions that participation affects your health care, housing status, zoning issues or police record. The real question may well be, Who could benefit from spreading such nonsense?

As outlined at 2010.census.gov/2010census/, most of the contact is by US mail and by households. The process is pretty simple but gathers comprehensive information. Any follow-ups are to fill gaps and are hardly threatening.

For the city of Milwaukee, such US mailings are planned for March 15 through March 17. Elsewhere nationwide, the mailings could extend into September. But the slogan is pretty simply: "We Can't Move Forward Until You Mail It Back"

The purpose of the campaign and the follow-ups is to get the information accurately and quickly, so activity will precede and follow the nation's official Census Day, April 1, 2010. Still, April 1 is a good gut check that you should be on track responding to survey requests related to the place where you live and the number of people in your household.

The census has a powerful influence on how society



The heavy Milwaukee media turnout in October was not entirely altruistic, since the US Census Bureau is buying local media ads and requiring companies to fill a detailed online report to better target the most elusive audience for filling out the important and confidential household surveys. Explaining the detailed process (below) was the head of the bureau's public service office, Raul Cisneros, who flew in from D.C. to be part of the presentation at the Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board.

provides for people. It is from the census that much of federal funding is calculated and allocated.

The census also determines political representation, most obviously in the Wisconsin State Legislature and the US Congress. Growth or loss in population according to the census has worked both ways, adding to Wisconsin members of the House in years past and removing one seat from Milwaukee after the 2000 census. While current surveys suggest Milwaukee is again growing, and no one expects radical changes out of this census, there clearly have been a number of changes in income, children needing education, transportation needs, tax levels, housing, employment and other issues all related directly to or indirectly to census information.

Census data can also determine your aldermanic district as well as the amount of money allocated to provide services and assistance in your community.

It is also a considerable area of temporary employment as the Census Bureau seeks volunteers to train in several supportive services. Among those are telephone assistants, neighborhood volunteers, and data specialists. The jobs require a range of abilities from concerned citizens devoted



to standards of accuracy and care. Helpful, caring attitudes also are much in demand.

Recruiting is underway and the majority of hiring takes place in the spring. You can prepare by downloading and printing out the Census Practice Test. (The practice test is similar to the actual test, which measures basic skills, abilities, and knowledge required to perform a variety of census jobs.)

Your application remains active if you have already applied for a census taker job. If you need to update your contact information, call the toll-free Jobs Line at 1-866-861-2010, which will route you to your local census office. Most door to door recruiters will be sought in their own neighborhoods, which helps in terms of familiarity, and all will be instructed on how to identify themselves and what to ask.

But since so much of the census is done by mail, only some residents will actually meet a census worker. A timeline of activity has also been developed, starting with the media information from now onward. Some others timelines:

Telephone questionnaire assistance begins February 25 and continues until July 30.

The US mailings and requests to mail the surveys back run from March 14 to September 30 and those will take care of most of the information.

However, there will always be non-responses and the need for follow-up interviews or re-interviews. Nonresponse efforts, in person and by phone, will run May 1 to July 10 and follow-up interviews are scheduled from May 7 to July 17.

As you can imagine, there is also considerable time needed to process, collate and record the results in usable data.

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Census Q & A

Let's answer the most obviously and frequently mentioned concerns, as outlined in media questions:

Who is supposed to complete the survey? Not every person receives a survey but every person living in the United States should be counted - all ages, races, ethnic groups, citizens and non-citizens.

How private is the information? All reporting is totally confidential. In fact, every census employee takes an oath to keep information confidential. Since it is vital for economic and social accuracy for everyone to be counted, the rules of privacy enforcement are mighty darn strict. By law (Title 13, US Code), the Census Bureau cannot share any of the answers with anyone or any other government agency, including Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Additionally every Census Bureau employee has taken an oath to protect information and is subject to a jail term of up to five years, a fine up to \$250,000, or both

What does "where you live" really mean? It is defined simply as where you sleep for most of the year. This is why one survey is sent to each household and every person living in the household should be recorded on the survey by someone put in charge of the survey, and that includes family members and/or roommates living at the same address.

Is the information sought intrusive? Some will always think so and worry why the Census Bureau asks such a range of questions about household size, space and so forth. Among the answers sought in the survey are if the housing unit is owned or rented, the telephone number, how many people live in the residence, if any additional people have not been included, the name, sex, age/date of birth, the relationship of a resident to the owner or chief renter, the race or origin, and if the person sometimes stays somewhere else.

But keep in the mind the absolute confidentiality. This is not an effort to find out if housing rules are being violated or what a responder's legal status is. What the census does is provide vital understanding of population and who and where people live. Visit www.census.gov itself and you will discover the value of these demographic profiles to every level of society - businesses as well as government, religious groups, historians and social scientists measuring population patterns and migrations, data specialists and on and on.

Can I get more information? As much as you want. The government website at 2010.census.gov/2010census/ is remarkably efficient at providing text information and multimedia insights into the 2010 Census. One feature is a national dialog of ordinary residents.

Incidentally, though right now it is a little early, there will always be those who receive a survey and then lose or misplace it. They can fix that problem, too from Feb. 25 until July 30, by calling 1-866-872-6868 (toll free) and requesting a replacement survey. Call any day of the week or weekend, from 8 a.m. until 9 p.m. If you prefer a Spanish-speaking operator, call 1-866-928-2010. For the hearing-impaired, dial 1-866-783-2010.



Transit Now calls on community to act

A rally Dec. 5 was merely a seasonal salvo for Transit Now, an organization with its own website, www.transitnow.org, and backing from business leaders, community groups and labor, including Citizen Action of Wisconsin, the Good Jobs and Livable Neighborhoods Coalition and Milwaukee's union transit drivers, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 998.

The goal? Good regional transit and a Regional Transit Authority to spur economic growth, job creation, and a healthier environment. Sponsors want action in January, when the legislature returns for a special session in Madison.

Politics and the lack of cooperation have stalled such regional transit efforts and funding for years. Without an RTA, our transit system will continue to crumble, people will be cut off from jobs, and KRM Commuter Rail (Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee) and other job-creating transit projects will be shelved despite the availability of federal funding and the clear votes of local citizens, say the sponsors. Call Kerry Thomas, 262-246-6151, or kthomas@transitnow.org, to get involved.

Milwaukee media asked tough and precise questions when the US Census Bureau brought in experts from Chicago and Washington, D.C., to explain the local side of the 2010 Census effort

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Trades

From Page 1

decades in the industry. "One out of every four construction families in the state is without a job," said Balistreri, which can be blamed on a combination of construction dry-ups and general losses in employment.

Tom Fisher points out from DeForest, where the Wisconsin Laborers District Council monitors the state situation and runs the busy training facility for union laborers, that the new government is almost alone keeping the industry's head above water.

The private sector is holding back.

In fact, it's the invisible man in projects that are all on their own while emerging from the shadows mainly in those private-public partnerships (infrastructure, roads and the like) that are actually picking up in some areas of the state. Balistreri doesn't expect to see any resurgence at all from the private construction sector in 2010.

Some of that is understandable as standard business practice.

Historically even as the nation moves out of a recession, private construction lags because planning takes such a long time and companies are not comfortable until all systems are go.

One of those systems is the financial sector, which claims it is loosening credit and willing to back big projects. Choose your

pick of who is telling the bigger lies, developers hollering for loans or bankers insisting they are finding money.

Economic experts say we've hit bottom and are bouncing back, but it takes quite a while for private companies to believe fully in America again and risk their tightly-held capital.

Fisher -- the union president, business manager and chair of the training fund -- rightly notes that "Many are suffering from continued tight credit that keeps them from moving ahead even if they want to."

So for Wisconsin the pressure is too much on the stimulus money and the government, and funds are arriving too slowly to satisfy these trade workers, who are desperate for a recharge.

The first bundles of two year stimulus provided a positive impact in many union quarters. Operating Engineers Local 139, whose huge training facility in Coloma concentrates of certification and makes sure Hazmat and OSHA specialties are provided even for apprentices, credits the stimulus money for much of its continued employment, but the work they do is concentrated on areas where the stimulus has already taken hold.

Other trades, looking for new gains in retrofitting and relying on promises of big government seed money, are still waiting.

The laborers know when the private sector starts coming back because of the canary in the coal

mine - the "architects and engineers" whose growing activity is the advance signal that life is returning to private construction. It doesn't seem to be happening.

Fisher focuses for his members' sake on the hard pragmatic attitudes in the business world that keep the job market from expanding.

Other leaders - both unions and elected officials -- attack the consequences of self-immolation.

The private sector has also been its own worst enemy by pretending for a decade that Wisconsin is some sort of special tax hell among the 50 states. Business groups and so-called analysts have used bad numbers (as many businesses now understand) to describe the tax burden and the deficit as uniquely burdensome.

Now come the newer more credible numbers, reluctantly reported even by those hounds of tax hell. In fact, Wisconsin nestles toward the middle of 50 states in tax weight, and even lower than average if you count tax dollars spent per person.

(Rather than admit their analysis has been fuzzy, the state's largest newspaper couldn't bring itself to say "we goofed for years" and now claims the total tax has fallen, rather than being figured incorrectly.)

In any event, this false but constant attack on Wisconsin as a bad place to do business has proven part of the circumstance making it so difficult to woo businesses here and keeping pri-

SPECIAL REPORT BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION TRADES



Boasting three training bays, and separate demonstration and classroom areas along with 35 courses, the Wisconsin Laborers have also set up winter classes to train members in fresh skills. They're getting ready to break out of the winter blues with expertise in newly needed specialties. Refresher or new technique courses include tunnel work, trenchless technology, welding, environmental remediation, asbestos removal and nuclear decontamination and demolition.

Photos from recent classes at DeForest were provided by Mike Haggerty

private construction from picking up, many estimate, until 2012. That's right. They may decide to sit on their hands and wallets for two more years. Just be glad these guys aren't running the Brewers.

Right now, about 15% of the skilled and experienced building and construction trade workers are sitting on the bench waiting for the Wisconsin coaches to call them in - in some trades statewide, unions estimated as many as 20% waiting on the bench.

But these coaches have made it clear that they are using the government stimulus money largely to turn part timers into full timers, or otherwise cut corners on new hiring. That may keep their noses or bank accounts above water, but it is little help for the families who want work more than handouts.

No wonder the pressure is on President Obama to get the stimulus funds moving faster into Wisconsin and add more help.

Businesses now have so many ways to survive without employing more people - and it is one thing to say things are getting better but until new manufacturing plants get built, new industries emerge and the jobs that went overseas come back (which no one expects), stopping the bleeding won't restore circulation.

This is why we call this a "jobless recovery," a term that spreads dread in the working community. Fear, as Labor Press reported in September, still keeps even the recipients of new funding from adding to the construction workforce in the state. Throw in the caution flags from the private sector, and it clearly will be a long climb out of this ditch.

But don't ignore we are climbing. Much of the recent news is actually about a steady slog up and out. If we can survive a long hard winter. See article facing page.



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Within the bouncing data, some positive signs of spring hop up

Just as a year ago when the unions were right about problems ahead, the union leaders today are right about more permanent signs pointing up in the building and construction trades, even if it may not bring improvement for a year or more.

First off, most agree, what is happening now just doesn't feel like downturns past, when no one was sure of the way out and the political leadership seemed blasé and uncaring.

Today, there is both a feeling of urgency and an underlying vitality and confidence in the strength of the economy. It would be nice if more private businesses shared that, but unions are used to being ahead in the optimism game.

One reason for the uncertainty is that technology is forcing America to change -- from automobiles to energy grids, from mass transit to highways -- and it is not yet clear which major change will be the winner. How do you prepare for that?

The laborers' Tom Fisher points out, "The stronger the skills, the more likely workers are to survive."

And who are the best prepared to add skills? Without waving the union banner, it's very clear in construction.

It is those members who pay dues to create marketing funds and loans to help businesses, to lay bridges of basic support to help families survive and particularly to fund modern training facilities to constantly re-educate themselves.

If pockets of improvement take months or years, positive attitudes have clearly positioned Wisconsin's building and construction trade unions to improve their skills in anticipation.

Second, the stimulus funds are indeed saving and creating real jobs in Wisconsin, though it is moving too slow to put trades workers back on the job in a hurry.

More recent hard numbers do suggest in all sectors that more than 4,000 projects have been awarded (some in combinations) and have created or saved more than 10,000 jobs -- all of which works out to a \$429 gain for every man, woman or child in Wisconsin. But there are a lot more dollars that should already be here now and millions more that won't arrive for months. In fact, Wisconsin is benefitting from the smaller portion of the stimulus money.

We're stuck with a double whammy. We want to measure and think about how we spend but we want the spending to move quickly.

In may be doing both.

In another study, the Associated General Contractors looked at southeastern Wisconsin and counted 30,200 construction jobs in October, perhaps 4,000 fewer than

October Construction Employment in Wisconsin

	1990	1995	2007	2009
Building Construction	23,700	28,900	31,300	21,700
Heavy, Civil Construction	12,800	13,200	18,300	17,700
Specialty Trades	58,000	67,100	83,200	74,300
TOTAL	94,500	109,200	132,800	113,700

Trade journalists, unions and government data-benders scramble to see trends in construction figures, but numbers can't tell the full story. Employment seems likely to creep down and up in portions of the construction economy, but many hard signs of today are harbingers of a hopeful tomorrow.

October of 2008 but less than a 15% drop and hardly the swoon most of the media is reporting. In fact, with a 3.4% growth, Wisconsin recorded the nation's second-highest percentage increase in construction jobs, beaten only by Michigan.

If nothing else, the disaster represented by unemployment in the nation's construction industry, about 18.7%, is less obvious here, though leader Lyle Balistreri points out that construction is always the last to recover from any major economic downturn.

So this good news may not last, but the report does estimate that Wisconsin is bucking the trend since as recently as September 2009, 30 states plus Washington, D.C., lost construction jobs and only 18 gained (two held steady).

Helping such figures in our region are several newly active projects - WE Energies, I-94 reconstruction, airport runways at Mitchell, a boomlet (if you can call it that) in downtown building, new family housing, bridge and street work (the stim-

ulus again), all aided by a notable rise in property values for the city, and actually an increase in demand for US manufacturing.

Some of this optimism on the ground has to be weighed against the negative employment numbers reported by the trade unions.

Union leader Lyle Balistreri points out that the unemployment numbers in the trades reflect "those collecting unemployment and those that have signed out of work lists in their respective union halls" but don't take into consideration those who have run out of benefits and those sitting home waiting for the contractor to act and have not yet reported in to the unions.

"This drives the percentage to closer to 25% statewide," said Balistreri.

Another problem: The related business boom that usually accompanies better manufacturing progress isn't really visible here in the construction trades, because the growth hasn't led to new buildings or fresh merchants and so forth. Companies

are absorbing the growth with current workforces, an artificial convenience of new financial practices that allows American

business to improve without workers getting much of the benefit.

Hurting Milwaukee County as a whole is the persistence of tired mastodon approaches to social problems, such as County Executive Scott Walker's insistence on freezing property taxes and benefiting profiteers by cutting residential incomes to the poverty level.

It's an approach that flies in the face of virtually every economic analysis that weakening the safety net, courts and transit systems simply imposes more burdens and drives down living standards in the entire community.



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Cruel myths, soft hearts play economic role

If society can recover in the face of all we're undergoing, admit it: We have an amazing economy. Yet every day someone with a political agenda creates new myths or facile evaluations to foster despair.

There always will be genuine bad news, of course. Inevitably, some of the early job numbers created by recovery funds proved inflated, particularly by private contractors working on government projects and eager to look good. Admittedly, levels of government move too slowly in processing data and dispensing funds.

Inevitably, banks are resisting being shamed into doing the right thing to loosen credit despite the obligation created by taxpayer supporter. (The banking industry brings to mind comedian Fred Allen's famous explanation of a movieland mogul: You can take all the sincerity in Hollywood, place it in the navel of a firefly and still have room enough for three caraway seeds and a producer's heart.)

But the right wing should at least be fair in this case, as much as it hates government. It is government involvement that has forced the exposure of bad data, slow process and selfish behavior. Private companies typically block reports of how they have

Comment

messed up their own data, money and attitudes.

Still, the current political atmosphere takes the best news (merchants doing better, jobless claims dropping) and finds a way to paint it in negative terms - consumers aren't spending as they once did (Wait a minute! This is bad news?), good-paying jobs are still scarce.

The trend is to be equally dismissive of bad news for working families. You know, those bleeding hearts who like to eat or take their children to the doctor. Still, to be honest, 15% layoffs in the building and construction trades are nothing new. Not good to be sure, but not new either. That percentage actually fits historic patterns in what has always been a boom and bust industry, cycling new growth, retreat, downturns and tentative clawing back.

Perhaps that pattern explains why even good upward news may not grab hold as hard as the negatives, but the biggest restraint on belief is the lack of jobs. Where it is especially ingrained, it affects the people we know -- families, children and immediate needs. Hard to



Knowledge beats rumors anytime – perhaps another reason for such crowded preparatory classrooms – Photos by Mike Haggerty.

see beyond that to a brighter horizon.

It must also be conceded that, for the best of motives, unions themselves are partly responsible for the lack of conviction that things are indeed moving upward.

Not the workers themselves - union members we spoke to seem amazingly confident in their own abilities and the belief that businesses must eventually come around to valuing such productivity and stick-to-itiveness. And the business community will almost knee-jerk to blame unions for insisting on wealth sharing, better pay and fairer treatment.

But you could also make a

strong argument that it is moral responsibility, one worker for another, that has also added the problem. The union factor of solidarity itself. In an era of plenty as well in this time of crisis, unions have given a lot to help businesses keep going, often by supporting other unions at the same plant or branch.

Unions do protect their own members' jobs by fighting first and only then accepting lower pay (theorizing that keeping jobs in the future is worth a pay cut now, and wondering why businesses seem unduly eager to accept such pledges without guaranteeing that the workers will be made whole in the future). But many unions have

also taken pay cuts among more established veterans to allow lower-paid unions to keep going.

From workers at the airport to municipal and county employees to Journal Communications, the stories keep coming of unions lowering their own pay so that threatened brethren (particularly in such areas as maintenance, clerical and cleaning) can keep their jobs.

This is probably the unsung story of working America. Some workers just lost their jobs and had no recourse, no benefits or community of support to fall back on. Others found unions at the same plant willing to step into the breach.

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**SPECIAL REPORT
BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION TRADES**

Unions help create new opportunities

Many union members are not just simply accepting the economic fate. There are any number of efforts underway, many by unions, that stand a good chance of changing the game:

Making new industry
That, bluntly put, is the enormous opportunity that involves using government stimulus dollars to not only create jobs but also develop strategies to encourage the private sector to get involved, offering them a path to profit that doesn't necessarily involve the level of financing of major office buildings or mall projects.

It falls into such areas as green technology, new fuels, retrofitting of old buildings and infrastructure, weatherization and more. The impetus for much of this right now has fallen on the state and federal government through various programs and grants. But the ultimate goal has to be that, when these programs end and the seed money runs out, there remains deeper and longer term community benefits in the form of costs savings, regular employment and more efficient use of existing energy production.

Many building trades, including the Laborers, are preparing to compete in that industry. According to laborers' leader Tom Fisher, "If we do it right, there is tremendous job growth potential in the emerging retrofit and weatherization industry."

If you look under recent headlines, such as the one that suggested how one in every eight

weatherization efforts was substandard, you will see that the actual results are better than the smear and that the failure is often in fly-by-night operations as opposed to marrying long-term rewards and employment. High standards and care do pay off and the substandard work often lacked the larger purpose and supervision that union training provides.

"We're about fielding safe and productive workers in careers they can count on," noted Fisher. Green technology and weatherization skills are now a big part of both the training as well as the national program of innovation and promotion by the laborers union.

Putting people to work is what the federal stimulus was all about, said Fisher. "But that initial investment really only pays off when you do the job right, don't treat it as a throwaway job and create sustained work tied to long-term employment."

The unions are looking to take a financial impetus from the government to do the right thing and turn it from a temporary handout and helping hand into an efficient, ongoing cost-saving industry.

What the laborers are emphasizing in such areas as weatherization, the steelworkers are doing with national promotion and conferences on broad aspects of green technology, including batteries, engine efficiency, new fuels, new manufacturing systems. Other unions are joining coalitions to build real future industries out of the need



The potential to be part of a new industry is one reason why the laborers aren't just waiting around – their training classes at DeForest have standby lists of members eager to get on board,

to reduce global warming, creating better cars and more efficient mass transit, even new fueling substations or grids along the nation's highways to anticipate the winners of all the research into the most effective emerging energy technologies.

"During the hard times," Fisher reflected, "Unions have to be willing to turn over every rock looking for jobs for our members." In weatherization, there is reason to believe that under the neglected rock is an entire new industry.

Storing knowledge for the winter.

Tour the apprentice programs, or visit DeForest, where the laborers have classes all winter

long, some 25 union students at a time, 90 or so taking classes daily with waiting lists. This year alone, Labor Press attended busy training sessions of new members (apprentices) and skill improvements for veterans among such unions as the bricklayers, the painters and the plumbers.

Much of this is ongoing regular improvement, but there are also a number of new incentives to develop the most modern of skills, the largest improvements in crafts and electronics and the best use of new materials.

The construction trades are behaving much like bears storing food and then hibernating (or in this case training) throughout the

winter in expectation of a better spring.

Facts support that anticipation.

The rank and file expects to be ready with new skills and understanding of best practices in such areas as green technology, asbestos removal and infrastructure. Many of these unions have engaged advanced training experts so that veterans can learn from the best to do the best.

That's a far cry from standing around moaning and waiting for things to get better. It's turning the advantage of being in a union into positive attitude and preparation

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This ad paid for by members of Sheet Metal Workers, Local 18.
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Health tales riddled with insurance denials

Sample the views from the floor - either here or by visiting Wisconsin Eye, which covered the proceeding:

Kevin Her, executive director of the Hmong cultural Shee Yee Community, discussed how he survived a hunting accident only losing the hearing in one ear. But he thought that nothing next to ongoing worries about no family health care. He's only offered impossibly high deductibles since he works for a non-profit cause - and since his wife gave birth via a C-section, which is regarded as a pre-existing condition.

Now a Cardinal Stritch graduate student, Clarissa Barnes didn't ask for sympathy about her thousands of dollars in unexpected medical bills but her story reminded listeners of what could

Student Clarissa Barnes (below) and Kevin Her (at right) pointing to the ear he can no longer hear out of.



happen to them with employer-based family health insurance for their dependents. She had to drop out of school and consequently lose family health coverage when she became ill in her early 20s.

Theresa Skrzyński, in a



story emotionally told by long-time friend and OPEIU retiree Judy Burnick, worked for many years before being felled by Crohn's disease (a debilitating progressive attack on the gastrointestinal immune system). At which point, as Burnick's litany recounted, she was abandoned by private insurance, family coverage, government plans, even Social Security disability snafus that an administrative judge hadn't decided in four years.



Nursing assistant Mike Garver and panelist and primary care physician Frederick DeBoe daily confront inexplicable tragedies.

Meanwhile the illness required surgery, steroid prescriptions and her Badger Care was discontinued once her daughter moved out at age 18. Government advisers dismissed her concerns without explaining that because of surgery she could transition to another Badger Care option.

The hard choice between basic care, basic living, even death and life, is seen daily by



Mike Garver, a nursing assistant at St. Francis Hospital, but "while I work with this every day" it was really emphasized for him what others routinely go through when he learned the cost of his own gall bladder surgery -- \$38,000 for a simply procedure. "I had good insurance, but what would I have done without such coverage?" he wondered aloud.

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Workers, friends well with rage, frustration

Several speakers shared emotional waves of frustration and even rage at the current health care system.

Gerry Gunderson, a Milwaukee Area Labor Council delegate, took the microphone for a moving tribute to a recently departed friend and activist, Skip Porter, and to rail against Skip's treatment leading up to his final illness, care denied early enough to make a difference - even though Skip and his family had nothing but good to say about his care at a union hospital, St. Francis.

But his disability coverage from his union work kept Badger Care from kicking in and then specialists hung up on him until Medicare coverage kicked in.

Would quick help have kept Skip alive today? No one knows for sure, but such slowness was criminal to his family, noted Gunderson.

That, Gunderson said, is the most obvious indictment of our social neglect, in this case dooming one of the community's most genuinely optimistic and caring citizens. *See his memorial on Page 16.*

Gunderson delivered a passionate criticism of the Democrats' bill in the Senate and another call for the single-payer system, which was taken off the table in early discussions.

Yet another concern, reflecting many worries at the forum, was explored by the head of the Milwaukee Building & Construction Trades Council, Lyle Balistreri, who admitted that he was confused about whether to support health care reform "or condemn it."

He feared that in its current form it could devastate union construction work, which has developed a multi-employer sys-



OPEIU retiree Judy Burnick (left) spoke emotionally for her friend, Theresa Skrzyński.

tem to pay for health care in an industry of many small contractors. "These multi-trusts have worked well for us but they're not cheap."

If the new rules tax these trusts, leaving the unions to fight non-union contractors simply on the hourly wage issue, where non-union companies can always race toward the bottom and undercut union workers, "It will render the unions non-competitive," said Balistreri.

"I agree we should all be paying into this system, but we have done so for years - and God knows over the years paid more than our fair share," he noted. "I resent the notion that working people should pay anymore. Working people have taken all they can take."

"The people who should pay for health care are the people who have profited in an outrageous manner, the people who have already made billions of dollars off of our health care."



BELOW: Gerry Gunderson (also on Page 1) spoke with deep feeling about the limitations of the current health system (see his obituary for his friend, Skip Porter, on Page 16) and pushed for much deeper change in health care.



Lyle Balistreri (left), who speaks for construction workers, worried about their future if health reform taxed their insurance (**the AFL-CIO has taken out similar ads of concern, see Page 17**). Offering information about exemptions and other unsung controls in the healthcare legislation was a visiting professor in the department of political science at Marquette University, panelist, Susan Giaimo. **BELOW:** Worries that legislators were too self-assured that they have the answers when "we've barely scratched the surface" was a lawmaker herself, - but also a nurse. Panelist and Assembly member Sandy Pasch expressed her sympathy for the speakers and her concern (see Page 14) that legislators had better be aware of their own limitations.



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Beware trickery even before reform passes

Candice Owley also hears such stories every day as union leader for 3,000 health care workers in the Wisconsin AFT local. The current health reform concept intends to marry the prevalent private insurance industry to improvements in care, including group insurance exchanges to lower costs, deepen basic coverage, explore best practices and wellness programs and remove pre-existing conditions as a gimmick to force people out of insurance. But Owley explored the games private companies are already prepared to play to keep their profits up despite the changes.

"I already see the high deductible tricks targeting people who can't afford this," talking about the plans that reduce premiums on paper by insisting on high co-pays or thousands in basic deductibles, which tempt consumers who couldn't pay the first wave before coverage kicks in. The myth of savings, Owley suggests, even "lures professionals who should know better." There's been a huge increase in the expansion of the high deductible plans.

"So much of our problem is



Nurse leader Owley's detailed warnings about trickery underway by providers had the legislators at the forum taking notes.

lack of access - and there are new and even nastier trends in the insurance" -- such as forcing people to pay add-ons if they ride motorcycles or smoke. "And the cost! We represent people who take home a \$10 paycheck because so much has been taken out ahead of that for their premiums. Every employer has got to do their share - we cannot have just some employers carry this burden."

Several of the proposed changes will clearly drop down the number of people engaged in paper shuffling and confusing errors in the backrooms of the

industry - and most genuine cost-saving advances won't take place until electronic record-keeping and redundant lab costs are eliminated. But gamesmanship to make a better system look more costly and more limited are underway, Owley warned -- if the legislation is not written carefully and if the private industry is not carefully watched.

For instance, everyone knows that the long-term savings will not be emphasized by private companies but rather the higher initial costs provided in more comprehensive coverage, when insurers can't drop people

for pre-existing conditions or similar health reasons.

But she warned legislators at



JoAnn Anton applauds the stories that move her boss, Kohl, while Lois O'Keefe (below) describes how her boss, Moore, keeps her cool.

the forum that, in effect, even if the health bills bring costs down there will be efforts to reduce trained staff, not just bean counters. That will knock out of work trained professionals at nursing homes and similar medical centers "though I don't know of a nursing home anywhere that is overstaffed."

"It's essential that attention is paid to quality of care, not to just cut down to the bone in Medicare and Medicaid. We have to have balance to not harm the quality. We have to be sure this is not what we intend in cost-containment," she said.



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Forum

From Page 1

started out, believing primary care would make it better," the panelist told the audience of about 100.

"It's worse today. I've never seen anything like this. If you need to be fired up, what you heard tonight is hardly uncommon. I am no expert on health care legislation but the issue does not boil down to insurance reform but a health system reform. The crux is not insurance but health care delivery."

So few of the bright medical students he meets are going into primary care or family practice, tempted by the greater income from specialties, DeBoe said, and that has to change because primary care will be the gatekeepers of a better system.

Another panelist who agreed with his concerns also pointed out what has been rarely discussed, how much of the legislation driving through the Senate to be reconciled with the passed House version does emphasize precisely such assistance.

Susan Giaimo, Ph.D., a visiting professor of political science at Marquette University, noted how many financial incentives and other carrots would increase primary care doctors and nurses.

"I sense a bit of gloom but I say take heart," she told the forum "The problems are real and the stories upsetting, but it's also interesting how little we hear about what's really in the legislation."

Clearly, though, the remedies will not be coming fast enough for suffering everyday Americans, and that was a common theme at the forum. "If one more person dies because we're moving too slowly, shame on our democracy," was a common remark.

Despite the Republican obstinacy, it is hard to find a thinking American, even a private insurance industry CEO, who truly supports the status quo. But the forum was hardly an Obama lovefest either, with as many worries about the bills the Democrats are moving through Congress as there was belief in change.

It was another reason that moderator Sheila Cochran, secretary-treasurer of the labor council, found it interesting that no general media attended though so many political officials and health professionals did. There were, she noted, "no TV cameras, no reporters popping up and down, maybe because there was no sign waving, no death panel fears, just real stories" - not a manipulated posture.

No one agenda was pushed except to contact public officials after this forum and speak from the heart. Many who took the hint are clearly worried whether the legislation is moving fast

For full weight of health testimonials, read Pages 12-14



One panelist simply listened throughout: Pastor Wanda Washington of Grace United.

enough or even in the right direction.

Dr. DeBoe emphasized better health delivery. Rep. Sandy Pasch, a nurse elected to represent the 22nd Assembly District, echoed the call and the danger of legislators thinking they've got the answers.

It was stories like she heard at the forum that drove her to run for office after 30 years as a nurse, she noted.

Her colleagues in Madison, she suggested, are delusional, when they "say things like the federal government should model itself after Badger Care, as if we've got it all fixed. It's the nature of politicians to pat themselves on the back, but we have barely scratched the surface."

"What good is a (Badger) card if no one takes it?" she said. "And too many providers won't."

"I'm seeing (fancy) hospitals being built that as a nurse my patients couldn't afford to walk through the door," she said.

"We have really gone from a mission-driven system to a market-driven system. I'm told that we haven't advanced on mental health because is it 'not a good product line'."

Another nurse on the panel, retiree Vivian DeBeck, an activist for the Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans, has participated in at least 30 such forums,



Bloggers for the AFL-CIO (at right) covered the health forum while Wisconsin Eye (at left) videotaped. The whole thing can be viewed online at: http://www.wiseye.org/wisEye_programming/ARCHIVES-forums.html#2906

and they are still "daunting - I well up with rage hearing them." And like fellow nurse Pasch she wants major improvement not legislative placebos

"But I have to remind all those who have spoken so strongly from the heart," she said, "not to give into anger. Anger and despair do nothing. Anger puts the enemies in control. No bill will make everyone in this room happy, and that is what the enemies are counting on, that divisions will split us apart, keep us from making any gains."

"Remember: groups win. The only way we get something is to work as a group. As a group we should pick out the things that absolutely have to be in there and then we storm Washington," she told the crowd to an eruption of applause. "We are not going to let four Democrats or the Republicans stop anything."

Said panelist Lois O'Keefe, Milwaukee staff chief for Rep. Gwen Moore: "Whenever I get worried and fume and fuss about what's in these bills, and as much as she would prefer this or that because the blue dogs are stopping this or delaying that, I'm brought back to earth by my boss."

"She always reminds me of the bigger picture, to not allow the perfect to be the enemy of the good. And we have to honestly look at history."

O'Keefe recalled how all the elements we now consider essentially right about Medicare were not in the original bill passed under LBJ, "it was pretty bare bones." But after ferocious opposition followed by clear success the rest was quickly added. (Other historians make the same point about the advances in Social Security.)

"So it's not bad that the current bill eliminates the worst practices of the private health industry and that both the House and Senate version support health exchanges and the public option," O'Keefe said. "It's certainly right that everybody will have some skin in this game."

"And we don't stop with this bill. If not everything is best the first time around, we make things better and we work it through."

Giaimo provided a more detailed rundown of elements in the Democrats' health reform that make the bills much more than a fix of the health insurance industry, reminding listeners that in other countries with lower cost and better health care, ways had been found to universal coverage without a single payer system.

Cost examination and oversight does not translate into government takeover. Forcing insurers to compete on price with exchanges prevents them from competing by continuing "worse practices" and would "solve the

gaps in coverage." The reform concept requires all employers to kick in but with special exemptions for smaller employers.

Giaimo also worried about bills short of the ideal, but echoed Cochran on how making bills is as ugly as rendering sausages. The argument may well be about where compromise leads to retreat, but compromise "does not halt advance," she noted. "Every country I studied didn't just pass one law and say we're done. And one thing that has worked is having medical professionals sit on the deciding committees."

"You all know that Sen. Kohl has a reputation of being a bipartisan guy, of working across the aisle," said his chief of staff in Milwaukee, panelist JoAnn Anton, a nice way of reminding the labor dominated crowd that Kohl has also listened attentively to the business community. "Well, who would have ever thought that bipartisanship would now be defined as maybe getting the vote of (GOP Sen.) Olympia Snowe?"

"But I will tell you that Sen. Kohl's support of the public option and for some of the basic principles outlined in this room - health care delivery, cost containment, expanding access - have been compelled by the stories you have shared, by the contacts from you that he has been listening to and moved by. These are the stories we needed to here, and I want to commend those who bring them to us."

Her personal thanks to so many of the labor activists who have led the charge in phone calls, emails and similar contacts brought a smile from moderator Cochran: "That may be the most refreshing thing I've heard in the last six months, especially out of Sen. Kohl's office."

"And we're not through," she announced at the forum's conclusion. This is the AFL-CIO's call to end the old year and start the new to get Congress to hear the stories, and "we will get this done now and that we'll get it even better in the future."



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Calendar

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

Friday, December 18

MALC Holiday Open House
Noon-4 p.m., Yatchak Hall, 633 S. Hawley Rd.

December 24 - January 3, 2010

Happy Holidays! MALC Office Closed

Saturday, January 9

Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration
Sponsored by UAW, with APRI and CBTU.
Refreshments, entertainment.
Key speaker: Sheila Cochran.
6-8 p.m., Laborers Local 113 Hall
6310 W. Appleton Ave.

Wednesday, January 13

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

Monday, January 18

National Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday

Wednesday, January 27

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

Wednesday, February 3

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

Air crew family leave finally taking off

It comes too late to help the 800 flight workers, many from Wisconsin, so cavalierly dismissed in the last two years at Midwest Airlines. But a long fight led by the unions that represent them -- and in fact the majority of America's flight crews -- have another victory in family care.

Airline flight crews will soon have the same family and medical leave coverage other working Americans have enjoyed since 1993.

The House of Representatives approved legislation in early December amending the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to allow airline pilots and flight attendants to qualify for leave. The bill now goes to President Obama, who is expected to sign it.

The FMLA requires state agencies and private employers with more than 50 employees to give workers up to 12 weeks off to care for themselves or a family member. But because of the unique way their work hours are counted, pilots and flight attendants have found it difficult -- if not impossible -- to meet the 1,250-hour-per-year threshold required for FMLA eligibility.

Pilot duty time is capped at 1,000 hours per year. For flight attendants, hours on the job between flights or on mandatory

standby do not count toward their FMLA credit, making it virtually impossible for them to qualify for this important coverage.

Yet Congress really "never intended to exclude flight crews from this coverage," says Edward Wytkind, president of the AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department. Still, these crews have had to trade away other benefits in contract negotiations in order to receive FMLA coverage.

The House bill matches an Airline Flight Crew Technical Corrections Act passed in November by the Senate. The action brought praise from a longtime advocate, Patricia Friend, president of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, which repre-

sents more flight attendants than any other union, just as ALPA represents more pilots. Both are pursuing Midwest-Republic management to fulfill the final promises to their members.

In related airline news, Delta Airlines has rejected a call for an immediate union election under the new rules undergoing public hearings at the National Mediation Board. The AFA requested the election after Delta, less unionized than Northwest, the airline with which it just merged, said unions delayed labor votes. The AFA responded by immediately asking for one under the new rules, which have received positive reaction except from airline executives.

In Memoriam

Safe home, Skip

Online tribute to Gilbert (Skip) Porter, who died November 29 after long illness at St. Francis Hospital.

Skip was a member of the Masters, Mates and Pilots Union, the Carpenters Union (as a millwright), and most importantly to him, the Industrial Workers of the World (Wobblies). He contributed articles and photos to Indymedia and The Industrial Worker.

Although his presence on picket lines and in demonstrations for justice was ubiquitous, he often derided speakers and "piecards" at such events as "therapists." His interests and knowledge were encyclopedic, and he humbly and willingly shared them (along with good food and drink) with others, and especially encouraged young folks in their radical activism.

He demanded to know,



Skip Porter as many knew him, on the picket line.

"Why aren't we out in the streets?" -- not just to show disapproval of the cause of the day, but to shut the whole thing down and create the world anew.

He lived a principled life. I was privileged to have known him.

-- Gerry Gunderson

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Fight for jobs moves from Obama summit to Hill

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka and Nobel laureates Joseph Stiglitz and Paul Krugman were among those invited Dec. 3 by President Obama for a special job summit on the next steps to address the urgent need to create jobs for the more than 26 million unemployed or underemployed workers looking for work in an economy in which there are more than six workers for every one job.

At this gathering of more than 100 experts from business, labor, community and government groups, Trumka discussed the five-point plan proposed by the AFL-CIO to boost the economy, an outlined already endorsed by state labor federations and many legislators.

The steps:

1. Extend the lifeline for jobless workers through unemployment insurance, food aid and health care assistance.

2. Rebuild America's schools, roads and energy systems. America still has at least \$3 trillion in unmet infrastructure needs. We should put people to work to fix our nation's broken-down school buildings and invest in transportation, green technology, energy efficiency and more. (Our reports on Wisconsin construction emphasize the need to speed more money to such new technologies.)

3. Increase aid to state and local governments to maintain vital services. State and local governments and school districts have a \$178 billion budget shortfall this year alone - while the

recession creates greater need for their services. States and communities must get help to maintain critical frontline services, prevent massive job cuts and avoid deep damage to education just when our children need it most.

4. Fund jobs in our communities. While workers go without jobs, important work is left undone in our communities. We should put people to work restoring our environment, providing child care and tutoring, cleaning up abandoned houses and more. These are not replacements for existing public jobs. They must pay competitive wages and should target distressed communities.

5. Put TARP funds to work for Main Street. The bank bailout helped Wall Street, not Main Street. We should put some of the billions of dollars in leftover Troubled Asset Relief Program funds to work creating jobs by enabling community banks to lend money to small- and medium-size businesses. If small businesses can get credit, they will create jobs.

Similar job creation steps are being offered Obama by many of labor's long-term intellectual partners, including the Economic Policy Institute. Most dovetail closely -- the differences partly semantics and affecting details in Step 5. The EPI, for instance, offers instead a job creation tax credit over the next two years. The tax credit would reward firms that expand equal to 15% of current payroll - in other words, additional hires

Participants at the summit



Hilda Solis

point out that many of the proposals are close to those offered by the AFL-CIO and it depends on which survive final wording, and financial analysis by Congress.

Within a week of the summit, on December 9, Obama gave a speech pushing for job initiatives that specifically embraced many of the proposals outlined by the AFL-CIO. He also endorsed aspects of the EPI proposal. The president urged Congress to get to work on

- Helping small businesses expand investment, hire workers

and access credit, including the concept of incentives to businesses that create genuine new jobs.

- Investing in America's roads, bridges and infrastructure.
- Creating jobs through energy efficiency and clean energy investments.
- Stewardship of TARP and overall fiscal discipline.

Phrased somewhat differently than the ideas presented at the summit, and requiring legislative details and selling to the public, Obama immediately followed up his outline by sending out a key team of advisers to explain his strategy to create jobs.

Among the leaders in the effort is Hilda Solis, secretary of labor, who immediately briefed national media, regional reporters in a conference call and state leaders on the economic initiative. Another key player is the chair of the Council of Economic Advisers, Christina Romer

Simultaneous to the summit, working people across America

gathered in their own forums. in Ohio, Minnesota, New Mexico, and California to talk about their experiences in communities among the hardest hit by the economic crisis.

Members of Working America and the AFL-CIO joined religious and labor leaders to discuss the impact and call for laws to implement the national policies that will create good jobs immediately.

The roundtable discussions were merely one part of a massive initiative led by the 11.5 million member AFL-CIO and affiliates like Working America to push Trumka's programs.

Working America represents 3 million members, 16.5% of them unemployed, making it one of the largest organizations of unemployed workers in the country.

Recently, it launched the Unemployment Lifeline (at unemploymentlifeline.org) as a resource to help people find employment.

Fight for jobs meets fight for health reform

As some amendments in the Senate seek to tax high level worker health care benefits to pay for reform - an issue that came up with considerable anxiety at the Dec. 2 Serb Hall forum - the national AFL-CIO is fighting the idea with a major video advertising buy that began Dec. 6, will continue until Christmas in D.C. and then, depending on the pace of reform progress in Congress, could expand to target balking senators in key TV markets.

In the extensive ad buy, the AFL-CIO is calling on working families to tell their senators: "Pass Health Care. Don't Tax Benefits." The ad

features diverse workers who say passing health care reform is a must, not an option - but taxing workers' health benefits is wrong. The ad emphasizes that such devices will lead companies to cut benefits and shift the cost burdens to families.

The ad follows release of a new study showing that a tax on health benefits - such as some senators are pushing - would lead employers to shift the costs to workers by raising premiums and co-pays. The Congressional Budget Office analysis also indicates that one out of five workers with benefits would be hurt soon after enactment of such a provision - and that the numbers would grow over time.

AFL-CIO videos can be sampled online at www.aflcio.org.

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From Denmark to EPA, a Blue-Green push

Union and environmental leaders of the Blue Green Alliance will participate actively in Copenhagen December 14-19 as part of the United Nations Climate Change Conference. Holding receptions and scientific presentations for world political and scientific leaders, the Alliance advocates will highlight this unique partnership for job-creating potential in clean energy and how these groups are working to advance climate legislation in the United States.

Among the scheduled participants from the Blue Green Alliance are David Foster, Executive Director, Blue Green Alliance; Terry O'Sullivan, General President, Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA); Carl Pope, Executive Director, Sierra Club, Mike Langford, National President, Utility Workers Union of America, Frances Beinecke, President, Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC),

Gerry Hudson, International Executive Vice President, Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Richard Iannuzzi, Vice President, American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Roxanne Brown, Assistant Legislative Director, United Steelworkers (USW), and Lauren Asplen, Assistant to the President, IUE-CWA, the Industrial Division of the Communications Workers of America.

Simultaneously, the Blue Green Alliance, with more than 100 prominent labor and environmental organizations adding their voices, is asking US Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson to enforce an existing law encouraging worker and union participation during EPA inspections of facilities using extremely hazardous substances.

In a letter, Jackson is urged to allow workers and their union representatives to point out dangers during agency inspections to

help protect both communities and the public. Currently, New Jersey is the only state enforcing the law (Section 112(r) of the Clean Air Act). Jackson was assistant commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection in 2005 when similar attention began and she is now being urged to do the same on a national scale. Jackson has also announced legal action by the EPA on damaging greenhouse gasses.

"Enforcing this law will help us reduce toxic releases to our environment, more accurately assess facility vulnerabilities and better prepare and respond to potential chemical catastrophes," said Foster, the executive director of the Blue Green Alliance. "It's time to enforce the law and make our workplaces, communities and environment more safe and secure."

More than 80 million people live, work and attend school within range of a potential cata-

strophic toxic release from at least one of the nation's 101 most hazardous chemical facilities, noted environmental and union specialists.

Since 1970, thousands of employees and union representatives have identified preventable hazards while accompanying OSHA inspectors. From 2003 through 2007, more than 94,000 OSHA inspections included worker and/or union representation. However, during the Bush Administration, the EPA has generally not included workers and their union representatives during inspections.

Signing organizations included the national AFL-CIO,

Change to Win, 21 national labor unions, and 14 national environmental organizations.

The Blue Green Alliance is a national partnership of labor unions and environmental organizations dedicated to expanding the number and quality of jobs in the green economy. The alliance includes six major labor unions - United Steelworkers, Communications Workers of America, Laborers' International Union of North America, Service Employees International Union, Utility Workers Union of America and the American Federation of Teachers - and two major environmental organizations - Sierra Club and NRD.

State aiding manufacturers

"Unfortunately it won't be back to business as usual for Wisconsin manufacturers," said Mike Klonsinski, executive director of the Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership (WMEP), a nonprofit consulting organization.

But special money did become available to help in November. State grant funds are available to help Wisconsin manufacturers improve performance, stimulate growth and respond to new challenges as the economy recovers from the recession.

"The changes that were occurring before the recession - high volatility, spikes in demand and hyper-competition - are accelerating in the post-recession economy," noted Klonsinski, whose partnership is a close ally of Wisconsin's technical colleges and training centers such as WRTP.

"Wisconsin manufacturers who adopt Next Generation Manufacturing principles can improve their competitiveness, win a greater share of global markets, and react quickly to market opportunities," said Department of Commerce Secretary Richard J. Leinenkugel.

The Next Generation Manufacturing grants, authorized by the Department of Commerce, are targeted to small and midsize manufacturers with less than 500 employees. Grants of \$5,000 to \$6,500 pay up to 50% of project costs for services delivered by WMEP. The remaining project costs are paid by the company.

A significant share of the funding already has been pledged for projects. Funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis; interested manufacturers should contact Dale Raab of WMEP at (414) 588-1350 or raab@wmeop.org.

WMEP is a private, nonprofit consulting organization committed to the growth and success of Wisconsin manufacturers. WMEP partners with many public and private organizations to serve Wisconsin manufacturers. Visit www.wmeop.org or call 1-877-856-8588,

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Greetings



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SEASON GREETINGS



ASC

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Reid joins exec board

Brian Reid became the newest member of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council executive board December 2 when he was the only nominee for the vacant Ozaukee County seat, was approved by acclamation, accepted and was sworn in ahead of the health care forum that took over the bulk of the delegate meeting.

Reid, already a delegate and warmly welcomed by his peers, lives in Ozaukee County and fit other requirements of the bylaws since no other member of his local was already on the board.

He is the business agent for the new Office and Professional Employees International Union Midwest United Local 2009, named for the year of its combined creation out of three OPEIU locals (Local 35 in the Milwaukee and Ozaukee counties area, Local 39 of Madison and Local 391, representing employees at Illinois' Roosevelt University). The staff at the MALC belongs to OPEIU Local 9.



Brian Reid being sworn on Dec. 2



In a Labor Press profile two years ago, Bobbi Webber joined other firemen to celebrate a retirement. This month, his members returned the favor. Webber was also key speaker last April to honor workers who died on the job.

Webber ending 33 years of service

Bobbi R. Webber will retire in January after three years leading Local 215, International Association of Fire Fighters, AFL-CIO, the heralded city firefighters. Webber was among only a handful of African American firefighters when he joined the local -- back when Gerald Ford was president, some 33 years ago.

He rose through the ranks to become supervisory captain and the first African American to lead the famous 950-member local, whose motto is "Courage, Integrity and Honor."

A retirement party was planned for Webber Dec. 15, expected to be crowded with dozens of officials, union leaders and members who have worked closely with him over the years. By the time you read this, the local will have elected a successor, but Webber leaves some mighty large boots to fill in both union leadership and public service (he was a member and then chairman of the Milwaukee Area Technical College board).

The recent battles in the headlines have been the fights at City Hall to preserve fire department jobs as officials and Mayor Tom Barrett struggled with tough financial issues. The result is that no firefighter lost a job but the five-man ladder trucks have been reduced to four. Webber was credited with mixing diplomacy and toughness throughout these fights.

His tenure was also particularly notable to the Milwaukee Area Labor Council since he brought the local back into the MALC after an absence since 1990.

Webber was a key speaker at the 2009 tribute to workers who have died on the job, a ceremony held at Zeidler Union Square Park in April. In what some would see as irony and Webber would describe as typical of the many sided role of public leaders, a fellow speaker at the event was Barrett, the mayor he fought on the issues of firefighter jobs, respect and continuity.



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