



Getting ready backstage to perform at the Dr. Martin Luther King event were the young dancers of Discovering Our Destiny. See Page 4 for more on this UAW sponsored event.

## Primary numbers

It's getting crowded out there with a dozen people contesting in Milwaukee School Board races in the February 20 primary and six lawyers facing off for Milwaukee municipal judge. Meet the cast of characters - the COPE committee did - and see the recommendations for Wisconsin Supreme Court and Milwaukee Circuit Judge as well - on Pages 10 and 11.

### ALSO

Moving through Congress Page 6  
See GOP See GOP run from Sensenbrenner Page 8



Chatting with potential voters and gathering signatures for her Jan. 2 nomination deadline at the MCLC Holiday Open House, Wisconsin Supreme Court hopeful Linda Clifford (center) later found out that she has a Feb. 20 run-off before the April 3 contest. More holiday photos Page 2. More on judicial races Pages 10-11.

## Shaming with song



In reminding a nursing home that one of its main suppliers, Superior Linens, was being challenged by UNITE HERE to do the decent thing for its workers, the choir of the Faith Community for Worker Justice also regaled traffic at 74th and North with its labor and holiday songs. Sympathizers at the Dec. 16 rally included students on holiday break from their out of state colleges - (from left below) Allison Ringhand and Amalia Oulahan.



# Is safety first? At last?

By Dominique Paul Noth  
Editor, Labor Press

Worker safety on the job will improve in 2007 because, frankly, there is no way left but up.

In the last six years, the Bush administration has been steeped in cutbacks, inaction and setbacks affecting a range of established safety practices and has simultaneously ignored fresh problems.

In an age of technological and chemical advances, there has been literally no one high up in the administration willing to listen to new complaints. At the same time there has been a concerted effort to erode protection for whistleblowers.

Not all companies set out to hurt workers. Some don't know any better because the government is advising them. Some knowledgeable ones have become appalled at the level of indifference and some, of course, only look at the bottom line.

But the failure to maintain and certainly to expand worker protection and health on the job is a consequence of the current one-sided climate in federal politics and regulation.

You will find traditional Republicans and businessmen married to a naïve ideological belief. Surely, they say, the unions tend to exaggerate the problems. Surely this is the bad apple problem of Abu Ghraib prison - what business in their right mind would deliberately cut corners to endanger their employees?

Would that were true. The evidence mounts that pursuit of

profits combined with resistance to union organizing has evolved into a deliberate policy that is killing people on the job.

The litany ranges from further delays in asbestos compensation for exposed workers (Bush even called these asbestos claims "frivolous") to the housing, office and skyscraper industry, where developers have gotten away with dodging or obfuscating on strong workplace rules implemented over years.

The Bush administration also repealed the mandatory workplace ergonomics standard established by OSHA (the Occupational Safety and Health Administration) to prevent repetitive wrist injuries (carpal tunnel). It opposed supplying OSHA with better levels of workplace inspection, cutting both funds and employees, and blocked legislation to help ailing nuclear plant workers.

The excuse was that such workplace efforts should be voluntary. But avoiding penalties simply invited noncompliance.

In reality, from almost the time Bush took office, his administration restricted OSHA again and again - on arsenic levels in drinking water, on testing for exposure to the dangerous metal beryllium, on union research as part of safety reports.

The administration also

camouflaged or consciously diluted health reports on the toxic exposure faced by rescue and recovery workers in the World Trade Center rubble, ensuring that 9/11 would not just be a horrifying day of carnage but is likely to produce health consequences for decades, some of which could have been mitigated.

Air traffic controllers on Labor Day (good timing, that) were greeted by new work rules that cut wages, increased shifts and fatigue and in effect weakened passenger safety. Industrial laundries and their chemicals were freed from following Environmental Protection Agency rules. And on and on.

Playing loose with worker safety was obviously not going to be challenged. The impact of the free-hand given the business community - and the reluctance to face the consequences - has had a radiating moral effect on the entire society. To tour just some examples:

**N**ew York State - Long a leader in construction safety, first or second in the nation, this "blue state" has seen 88 laborer deaths since 2003, often workers falling untethered from scaffolding improperly shored.

Much of this - and similar **Safety continued Page 9**





Local 5001 leader Candice Owley traded in her nurse's cap for more festive holiday attire at the open house.

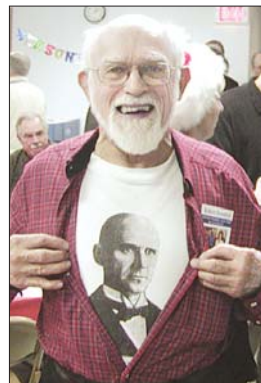


## Politics intermingle with holiday cheer

State Sen. Tim Carpenter exchanged cards with Debra Standridge (right above), president of Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare-St. Francis, at the nurses' open house Dec. 13. It was another reminder that union holiday parties are not just for workers to mingle, nosh and catch up. Elected officials, election hopefuls and business leaders also use these events to contact and network. This gathering was at the Greenfield Ave. offices of the Wisconsin Federation of Nurses & Health Professionals, AFT, AFL-CIO.

**Photo top right:** Even more candidates with clipboards showed up Dec. 15 for the MCLC Holiday Open House, particularly with a Jan. 2 deadline looming. Sharing multiple conversations at this table were (front) Leon Todd, a frequent school board candidate, and (from left) voter protection expert Anita Johnson, AFSCME 48 President Paula Dorsey, Ald. Willie Wade, Milwaukee County Supervisor Toni Clark and UWM teacher and fair trade activist Steve Watrous. **More on the Feb. 20 primary on Pages 10-11.**

**Right:** Philip Blank stepped down at the end of 2006 after a remarkable half century as a delegate to the labor council — first for his American Federation of Teachers Local 212, then as leader and spokesman for retirement groups. His labor support and philosophy are hardly slowed, though, as he demonstrated at the MCLC party by exposing his Eugene Debs undershirt.



## Trapshooting teams organize

It is well known that bowling and golfing are league sports supported by the Milwaukee County Labor Council, AFL-CIO, but for decades the council has also sponsored the MCLC Trapshooting League. It now conducts its contests at Lake View Rod and Gun Club at Lake Muskego.

Teams of six shooters are now being formed for the 20-week season that starts the second week of April (usually on Wednesdays).

Interested trapshooters can form a team sponsored by their own affiliated local. If your local doesn't have enough shooters to make a team, you can also sign up for an independent team, each formed as soon as the inquiries reach six.

Last season, eight teams of six competed. Each local pays \$185 to field a team. For more information or to sign up, contact trapshoot organizer Roger Schmidt at (262) 782-0605. Or contact MCLC secretary Robin Lundgren at (414) 771-7070.

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# Goodyear deal halts growing public anger

Wisconsin unions were ready to rumble, or at least march into the spring if necessary to support some 15,000 striking steelworkers at Goodyear. Dozens of Milwaukee members had already joined the USW in leafletting tire dealers here, with supportive honks from cars passing on nearby highways.

Hundreds more from throughout Wisconsin made the trek to the Sun Prairie Goodyear plant to back the strikers there. Many contributed gifts so that the strikers' children would not lose Christmas. And both sides in the walkout that began in October seemed resolute that they would not budge in their demands.

But in December, in part because of inroads from the union's consumer awareness campaign, the tire maker reopened negotiations and by Christmas there was a new deal.

The USW and supporting unions had made an economic point as well as moral one, pointing out the dangers of building tires with non-union workers, and reminding communities of 2003. Back then, when Goodyear was in financial peril, the workers had given up wages



In early December, union supporters gathered in a parking lot to get leafletting assignments for Milwaukee Goodyear outlets.

and both health and pension benefits to keep the company going in the US.

It even agreed to the closing of one plant in Alabama while simultaneously working closely with management at every remaining US plant to increase productivity and enhance manufacturing efficiencies.

By 2006, in what has become a familiar corporate story, Goodyear had rebounded from the edge of bankruptcy. Its stock value had increased five-fold, its top executives earned millions in bonuses, but it didn't

take the new profits to fund its pension and medical obligations.

So it came back to the table determined to slash those and to close more plants immediately, ship more work to a big plant in China (where the workers get 42 cents an hour) and take away medical coverage from both active workers and retirees (some 30,000 spread around the county).

It was intolerable, even shameless to the USW negotiators, particularly since the workers had gone out front as personal salesmen for Goodyear as a good union company keeping most of its jobs in America.

The new offer would decimate the future for workers who had been promised and had

earned a brighter finale and would immediately throw out of work 1,100 others. Refusing to give up on their retirees, the USW members went on strike.

Goodyear sales reportedly suffered in the face of leafletting at its dealers and a union campaign reminding consumers what happened in increased tire failures the last time a major tire company (Firestone) brought in scabs to operate sophisticated production.

USW leaders described the final contract as a "bittersweet victory." Douglas Drake, local USW leader who thanked the MCLC delegate meeting in January for all the support, also expressed some mystification.

He pointed out that what had happened at Goodyear was

## Cochran on TV panel

MCLC Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran will join a televised panel of experts discussing "Regional Development - Can We all Work Together?" when Fourth Street Forum launches its four-part February series on "Pathways to a Prosperous Southeastern Wisconsin."

The program is taped at noon Thursdays (in this case Feb. 1) before an audience at historic Turner Hall, 1034 N. 4th St., and than televised the following weekend on public TV's Channels 10 and 36.

almost a textbook case around the nation about issues that were hot in the November election -- health care, outsourcing for the lower labor costs, disdain for the local communities that rely on strong manufacturing jobs. He pointed out that everyday working people responded to the campaign and were avoiding doing business with Goodyear, and that such efforts by the union were just heating up. Yet even in states where plants were threatened (such as Wisconsin) there was scant media coverage of either the strike or the issues.

The new contract requires Goodyear to rescind its immediate closure of its Tyler, Texas, plant, and provides for a one-year period of transition during which workers will have the opportunity for sizeable retirement buyouts. Even more, as long as the company stays in the private brand tire business reflected at Tyler, such work must be done by USW members.


The company also agreed to pay \$1 billion to secure medical and prescription drug benefits for current and future retirees.

The company also pledged to invest \$550 million to improve its USW plants to make them globally competitive.

The USW (the new name for a merger of Steelworkers and PACE) represents more than 850,000 members in the US and Canada.




Signs were part of the leafletting that greeted traffic outside a local Goodyear dealership.



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# Dr. King not the only guiding path at UAW tribute

Inspiration from Martin Luther King dovetailed with memories of a local union leader January 6.

As the UAW offered its 18th annual tribute to the civil rights icon at the Washington Park Senior Center, several of the speakers were doing double duty.

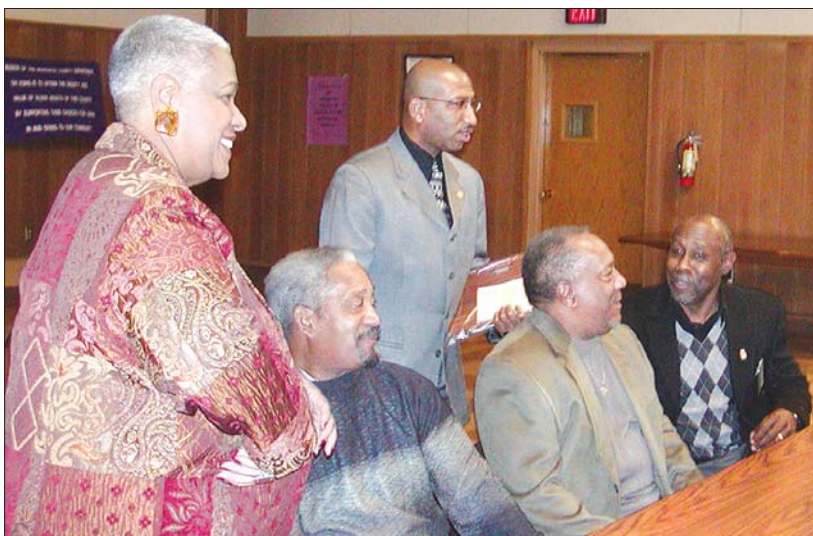
First they used King's own words and ideals to explore the evening's theme: "Where Do We Go From Here -- Community or Chaos?"

Then, in sometimes tearful personal testimony, they revealed how Janie Jackson prodded so many of them out of indifference and into effective action, either on unionism or civil rights or both.

After a long battle with ALS, Janie Jackson died last year of a heart attack. Her life had been dedicated to her United Auto Workers colleagues at Delphi, her real and special families in the community, the leaders she raised up out of the inner city, her church, her volunteer activities and her yearly guidance of the King tribute.

One of the key speakers, Alderman Joe Davis, urged the community to recognize the important values reflected in King's human conscience and civil disobedience -- and pushed the audience to be "like King" in finding fresh voices and commitment to improve society.

But he returned to the podium to praise the Jackson family (including her widower, Major, who was in the audience) and to



Two of the event's speakers (standing), MCLC Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran and Ald. Joe Davis, chat before the tribute with (from left), Major Jackson, the late Janie Jackson's husband, her cousin Loren Mudd and Wendell Harris Sr. (a candidate for school board).

signal how much the community should be just like Janie.

Davis recounted how he sought advice from Janie and her family when he first decided to run (for county supervisor) but barely squeaked through a primary he should have won handily. He was goaded by Jackson and her close friend, MCLC Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran, to take his responsibilities more seriously and work harder to be an effective candidate.

With their tough advice he pulled in 60% of the vote and has never lost since.

"Without Janie, I would not have a political career," Davis said.

Master of ceremonies Jay Reinke offered an eloquent clarification of how King valued human life and demanded social action to counter the effects of poverty, racism and corporate greed. But he also revealed that he had been on the sidelines of union causes and civil rights until Jackson got hold of him. Reinke is now an AFL-CIO field mobilizer.

Cochran recalled how it was her best friend, Jackson, who pushed her to union causes and

full recognition of her own talents. She described the many trips the two had taken to a place beloved by Jackson -- Black Lake, the Michigan retreat and education center run by the UAW and named for legendary leader Walter Reuther and his wife, May.

There, in rural isolation, with an open glade and eternal flame for Reuther, union members gather for formal classes and informal conversation along with intense training as activists.

Black Lake not only filled Cochran with the spirit of service, she recalled, but was imbued with fun as she and Janie shopped enthusiastically at every major mall between Milwaukee and Onaway, Michigan.

In honor of their departed friend, the sponsors announced the establishment of the Janie



Fred Royal, UAW chairman of the event, works backstage to finalize the tribute.

Jackson Black Lake scholarship. It will raise money to send local union activists to the civil rights awareness and training sessions that Jackson used so well to inspire community leadership.

The UAW Milwaukee Metro Area Civil Rights Council also received a plaque from the city commemorating its civil rights work - appropriate timing since this was the last King gathering under its auspices.

But that doesn't mean the end of the King tribute, said UAW leader Fred Royal. The Milwaukee council is merging into the UAW's larger Midwest civil rights council, so Milwaukee and Kenosha will join in planning future events.

The evening moved back and forth between sorrow and uplift. The young dancers of Discovering Our Destiny charmed the crowded hall while the choir from Grace United Church of Christ got everyone clapping.

Touching the audience further were the poems of Langston Hughes as interpreted by Andre Lee Ellis and the solo vocals of Corlis Morgan.

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Preparing the decorations for the evening crowd at the Pfister Hotel's new Mason Street Grill was UNITE HERE Local 122 member Anna Gigstad. The restaurant opened in December and is adding lunches this month. It features an open kitchen area so diners can see gourmet chefs at work, private dining rooms, dining booths and tables looking out on Jefferson St.

## Downtown hotels agree to new UNITE HERE deal

Two of Downtown's premiere hotels -- famous amenity centers for conventions as well as business and leisure customers -- have a new three-year agreement covering food service, housekeeping and related services by its members of UNITE HERE Local 122.

Workers at the Marcus Corporation's Pfister and Hilton Milwaukee City Center ratified the new deal in late December. It improves health and welfare benefits, increases pension benefits and provides above average wage increases retroactive to the end of the previous contract.

It covers some 500 UNITE HERE members and contains special clauses and conditions reflecting the diverse jobs handled by these employees. The Hilton has noted restaurants and a popular Water Park. The Pfister on Dec. 6 held the grand opening for its new restaurant, the Mason Street Grill, which added lunch to its dinner hours in January.

The negotiating committee, drawn from both hotels, also hammered out favorable new language on job security and disciplinary procedures.

Coordinating the negotiations were Sam Gallo and Chris Vidmar business manager and business representative respectively for Local 122, and Dave Morton representing UNITE HERE's Chicago and Midwest Regional Board.

But Gallo pointed out that the workers from the hotels who served on the bargaining team were particularly valuable in their knowledge and intense contributions protecting the concerns of their fellow workers.

Members from the Hilton were Rose Allman, Tomica Cross, Victor Goldsberry, Kathy Jackson, Grace Kelly, Louise Kinard, Herbert Merrill, Lillie Young and Lavinna Wright

And from the Pfister: Tony Calderon, Josefa Cueto, Mickey Ford, Calvin Jones, Sandy Stowasser and Perry Ward.

## Bowling

### MCLC MIXED SENIOR BOWLING

#### DECEMBER 2006 RESULTS

TEAM	WINS	LOSSES
GUTTER RATS	72	40
LABORER'S 113	59	53
CRAZY 8's	56.5	55.5
1 BOARD OVER	55.5	56.5
8 BALLS	50	62
SLAMMERS	48	64

#### IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 500

SAM SAMUELSON	672
WAYNE FRANZEN	611
DAN LAACK	595
BOB WAGNER	568
DEL GROSS	549
ELMER HELM	507
HANK ZEISSE	506

#### IND. HIGH GAME OVER 185

SAM SAMUELSON	279
DEL GROSS	246
WAYNE FRANZEN	245
DAN LAACK	229
BOB WAGNER	206
HANK ZEISSE	194
GEORGE BARAK	189

#### IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 395

RAE MATOWSKI	489
LAVERNE WERNER	419
ELAINE KARIER	417
PHYLLIS NAVARRETE	398

#### IND. HIGH GAME OVER 155

RAE MATOWSKI	166
LAVERNE WERNER	163
ELAINE KARIER	162
PHYLLIS NAVARRETE	156

## Calendar

For updates visit [www.milwaukeekeelabor.org](http://www.milwaukeekeelabor.org)

### Wednesday, January 31

#### MCLC Executive Board

2 p.m., Yatchak Hall, 633 S. Hawley Rd.

### Saturday, February 3

#### Legislative Breakfast

8:30 a.m. - noon, Alverno College Technology Center  
3400 S. 43rd St. Cost: \$18

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### Wednesday, February 7

#### Delegate Meeting

Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO

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

Nominations for Officers take place at this meeting for locals and unions that are up to date on membership.

### Monday, February 26

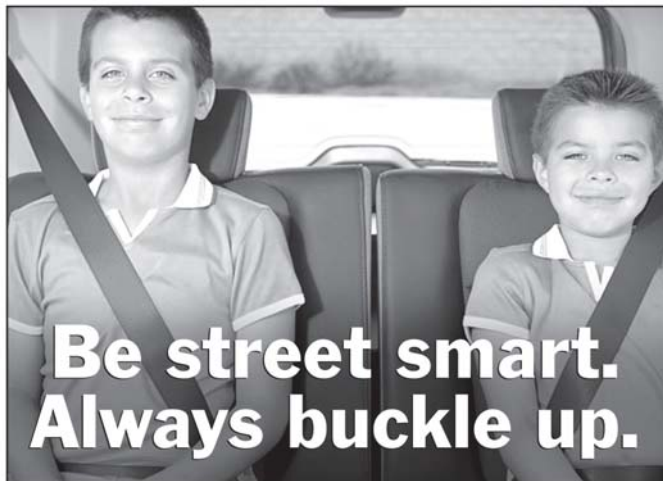
#### New Alliance Listening Session

7-9 p.m. Yatchak Hall, 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Big changes face Wisconsin's labor councils,

but the planners need your feedback

More information Page 6 and at [www.milwaukeekeelabor.org](http://www.milwaukeekeelabor.org)



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# Airport screeners on verge of restored rights

Moving rapidly through its 100-hour pledge to fix long abandoned domestic crises, the new Democratic House has speeded to the Senate a range of legislation of keen interest to labor unions: Minimum wage, ethics reform, Medicare fairness, renewable energy, homeland security - wait a minute! Homeland security?

Granted, finally implementing many recommendations of the 9/11 Commission is important to all citizens. But why should the homeland security legislation be of keen interest to labor unions?

For that, you have to look at the six-year campaign by the Bush administration to deny basic internationally-recognized labor rights. When forced to create a Department of Homeland Security, in fact, Bush turned even that moment into another way to bash unionized federal employees.

Congress didn't intend to sideline the worker concerns of the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO, but there was a footnote in the bill that left the decision on allowing bargaining rights for some categories of employees up to the administration.

So the White House leaped at the loophole, and in effect removed the right to unionize for some 43,000 airport screeners authorized through the Transportation Security Administration (TSA).

What made the decision insulting to the AFGE and many working people was the justifica-

tion -- "national security concerns." Today, that has become a tiringly familiar and obviously broad Bush brush -- if he wants something and can't explain it, it's a "national security issue." Back then, though, the country hadn't yet caught on.

The implication was spelled out more clearly in a press interview with a TSA administrator -- union membership was not appropriate in national security hires.

Unions were outraged. OK, many of them vote Democratic, but when last we looked Democrats were as strong a bastion of real patriotism as Republicans.

In fact, unions pride themselves on their love of country and can't quite grasp why their networks aren't encouraged by the administration.

Their union structure helps develop higher job standards and performance, which is something national security clearly needs.

Even private companies acknowledge that unions have expertise that can foster cooperation on goals and productivity -- something else national security sorely requires.

After 9/11 and other disasters, it was union workers not just within the federal government but first-responders who became the models of tireless public service.

The animus to unions has cost the country quite a few knowledgeable eyes and ears. Airport ground crews, longshoremen, train and truck cargo haulers - the people who best know the holes in the system and



AFGE President John Gage (right) meets with Rep. Bennie G. Thompson (D-Miss.), chair of the House's Homeland Security Committee, at a Jan. 10 D.C. press conference celebrating House passage of the Homeland Security bill.

how to close them - have been stiff-armed from participation, all because this administration comes from a corporate background suspicious of union representation and preferring to impose rather than propose the best ways forward.

If anything, over the decades, unions have been criticized for how automatically they have supported military adventures. Fully two-thirds of the leadership of AFL-CIO unions are military veterans. USLAW (US Labor Against the War) is now a major movement in labor circles, but its leaders say they had a harder road winning support because of the unions' close affinity with the military and government action.

"You knew the Bush war was in trouble when the majority of these unions spoke out in opposition," said one USLAW leader on a D.C. panel. "Union members are often military families and encourage their children into service - when they turn against the war, that's something."

The White House didn't stop with airport screeners. It took federal judges and broadsides from international labor groups to thwart new personnel rules in Homeland Security that would have denied collective bargaining to more than 700,000 US

Defense Department workers and 160,000 employees in the Department of Homeland Security.

But the airport baggage and personnel screeners were still in legal limbo, denied the right to choose or not to choose a union. Probably more disturbing to the general public was the simultaneous lack of whistleblower protection - in a security arena. Workers who reported problems knew they could face instant dismissal.

The Bush policy looked even more ludicrous since federal frontline personnel, from custom agents to border guards, have union rights.

Since the imposition of the rule, TSA has led the federal agency list in turnover of personnel and in rates of highest injury.

John Gage, president of the AFGE, points to the number of proven cases of "discrimination, retaliation, adverse actions, mandatory overtime, and fear of coming forth to report problems" among airport screeners.

He also points out that the existence of union protection would stabilize the workforce and improve security, helping establish a high standard of behavior and efficiency that has emerged as one of the major complaints of air travelers.

"The new House has begun

the process of righting a terrible wrong," Gage said. "TSA's denial of collective bargaining and other civil service rights is not what Congress had in mind when it created the agency, and TSA no longer will get away with treating its valued employees like second-class workers."

The House in bipartisan fashion agreed and in its new legislation took out the footnote.

Like all the bills whipping out of the House over to the Senate, the path to becoming law will not be as swift or sure as the public may hope for. For instance, the Senate was adding business tax cuts to the increase in minimum wage to avoid a Bush veto.

Changes in all the bills propelled out of the House will require a resolution of versions with the Senate, and then everything goes to the president for either signature or veto.

The Homeland Security bill may be in for a rough ride on some of its elements. The House bill would require screening of all air cargo.

But as we went to press, the collective bargaining rights were not at issue.

The newly Independent (rather than formally Democratic) chair of the Senate homeland security and government affairs committee, Joe Lieberman, supports the provision, which enjoyed bipartisan support in the last session before the White House shot it down.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

## Listening sessions vital to New Alliance

How will Wisconsin get to year-round mobilization that advances working families legislation, wins elections and supports existing unions while growing the labor movement?

It's a big challenge that requires a fresh structure and innovative programs. All this is the aim of the Wisconsin New Alliance Committee. Its plans and ideas require diverse feedback from union members, not just elected leaders and delegates but from the rank and file.

That makes the listening sessions around the state vital. New Alliance is supported by more than 30 unions, the Wisconsin AFL-CIO, central labor councils plus representatives from the AFL-CIO Community Services, Alliance for Retired Americans and various constituency groups.

The core groups and the mission will inevitably lead to major changes in the financing, networking and organization of labor councils.

Learn more and provide reaction at 7 p.m. Monday, Feb. 26, at the New Alliance Listening Session in Yatchak Hall at 633 S. Hawley Rd.

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# Even GOP seems to have shelved Sensenbrenner

By Dominique Paul Noth  
Editor, Labor Press

## Comment

From the conservative castle that is his 5th Congressional District, Republican James Sensenbrenner offered an astute observation after the November election — that the gay marriage amendment pushed so hard by his party had backfired and helped cost control of the Wisconsin legislature.

The man behind the moat did not mention the other self-impalements — derision of moderates, sideshow legislation, arrogance in office, and the belief that only heads on a pike signal victory.

But certainly the three-decade congressman correctly suggested that the gay marriage amendment was a stupid as well as a useless and damaging issue. Hundreds of thousands cheerfully voted for it and then turned around and voted to re-elect Democratic Gov. Jim Doyle. Thousands more — new voters clustered around private and public campuses — voted against it and then voted against the creators of this folly.

When the rural dust cleared, the Democrats had the state Senate and had shrunk the GOP's Assembly margin by 75%, and these newly motivated citizens are likely to return to the polls in future elections.

Unmentioned by the feudal baron — and unchallenged by media pundits when he offered his analytic excuses — was his own role nationally in the Republican loss of the US Congress and various state houses.

He had become a national symbol of what is wrong, high-handed and non-analytical in conservative Republican ranks. The term "Senselessbrenner" entered the national lexicon, not just for immigration policy. It reflected a

widespread feeling that beligerency, closed doors, dismissive "dead of night" deals by the right-wing in power were not the way the country should be going — and almost all of that was embodied in his imperial obduracy.

The fallout from Sensenbrenner will continue to devastate his own party while uniting opponents as never before.

Angry governors of both parties are facing the financial crippling of the Real ID bill Sensenbrenner bulled through Congress, an unfunded mandate requiring local driver license clerks to decide if a green card and a birth certificate in Yoruba, Swahili or another of thousands of world languages were valid. This will be like wading through a stuffed grain silo in search of a shirt pin.

Federal judges from eras of Reagan, Clinton and both Bushes complained of Sensenbrenner's antagonistic manner and dismissive attitude to their efforts to bring some common-sense changes to sentencing guidelines. "Judges were targeted under the Sensenbrenner committee for speaking out," said one federal judge. Now their ideas will get a fair hearing.

Many Republicans who followed his lead in trying to criminalize hard-working immigrant families — and anyone who helps them — are now out of office. Immigration was not the major issue in the 2006 elections, but it sure didn't play as Sensenbrenner scripted it — trying to conflate undocumented families seeking a better life with terrorists who have the funding to avoid climbing fences or wander-

ing for days in the desert.

From Arizona to Ohio to Wisconsin (ask Mark Green), those colleagues who failed to distance themselves from that simplicity — and even ran TV ads demeaning immigrants — paid the price in November, something Sensenbrenner neglected to mention in his post-election analysis.

It is hardly accidental that the first actions of the new 2007 House, supported by many Republicans, was to curtail the sort of corporate travel and lobbyist access he had thrived on, and attack the "foot on neck" manner that typified his reign as chairman of the House judiciary committee.

His tenure as chairman was scheduled to end in 2007 regardless of who controlled the House, but, tellingly, his own party has denied him major appointments on any committees, a major "please go away" message to so veteran a legislator.

With new "pay as you go" rules, it is also likely that Sensenbrenner's pet billion dollar project — funding for a 700 mile border security fence on the Mexican border — will be sacrificed by his own party on the altar of economic frugality. It was a folly that failed as an election issue or as an intelligent security measure and mainly benefits the rapacious "coyotes" who will now charge much more to sneak in hungry families.

What really ticks off the national GOP apparatus is that Sensenbrenner's combination of policy and image may have cost them national office for decades.

In 2004, the GOP was crowing that 44% of Latino voters supported their candidates. But in a mere two years the voters demonstrated that any affinity to the GOP on family and religious values, work ethic and entrepreneurship had evaporated in the rhetoric of Sensenbrenner and his ilk and actually moved to the Democratic column.

Recent surveys indicate that in 2006, an amazing 70% of the Latino vote went for Democrats — and this was also the main demographic group that was galvanized to vote, 37% more so than in 2002. The 6.5 million Latino voters are rapidly increasing as 50,000 US Latinos turn 18 every month.



Sensenbrenner, understandably no longer the face of the GOP.

Immigrants themselves, and the children and grandchildren of immigrants, also know personally how the Republicans have resisted giving them the same breaks as other US residents in worker rights and in tuition costs for higher education.

How short-sighted this approach is to the US' own economic interest has been revealed in recent respected surveys.

There is scant evidence that undocumented workers are taking jobs from US citizens. What they pay in taxes (not to mention as consumers) easily offsets any pressure on government funded services in health and education. They contribute billions in Social Security they will never collect.

Americans on both sides of the debate have been disturbed by the government response to all this, some light fines to American corporations while hundred of immigrants are rounded up in plant raids and summarily deported, splitting parents from children and further ripping the fabric of family that has long served as America's hallmark.

In technology, a remarkable 25% of entrepreneurs are immigrants, adding powerful revenue and jobs to the US economy. And where we don't have statistics we have our newly opened eyes: Drive down any street in Atlanta or Milwaukee and you will see immigrant-started businesses everywhere you look.

Yet largely because of Sensenbrenner's intractable stance, Congress hasn't fixed contradictory laws. Nor can the GOP claim they were not forewarned of the consequences.

As Nation and Madison Capital Times columnist John Nichols pointed out last May: "His vindictive immigration 'reform' legislation — which would jail good Samaritans, including priests and nuns, for aiding immigrants — provoked

some of the largest demonstrations in American history. That, in turn, has stalled serious discussion of genuine immigration reform at the federal level."

Nichols may have been a tad optimistic about how many of the congressman's Republican colleagues would distance "themselves from his approach and, especially, from his crude rhetoric." Some sure tried, but in the heat of campaigning and TV ads, many succumbed. That also played into the party's historic indifference to the voices on the street — not just on immigration but on family income and Iraq.

To his GOP colleagues in the House, where Tom DeLay is long gone, the vessel of all this distaste became Sensenbrenner, particularly since the Latino community has never been the sort of monolithic bloc in party voting that historically has been signaled in other minority communities.

Until now.

Invited January 6 to speak at the UAW's Martin Luther King celebration at Washington Park Senior Center (see Page 4), the leader of workers rights group Voces de la Frontera, Christine Neumann-Ortiz, pointed out that Sensenbrenner became the voice and face that led to major mass marches, three in Downtown Milwaukee, and occasioned the successful lobbying that thwarted his worst legislative ideas.

Beyond that, said Neumann-Ortiz, "There is a new unity in the working class and cooperation as never before" among African Americans, Latinos, Democrats and community groups.

To this point, Sensenbrenner's constituents have been indifferent, when not supportive, of his dismissive attitudes and high conservative egoism. They have apparently not yet noticed that he has been sidelined as a GOP policymaker and power broker.

But more openly than ever before, state Republicans are discussing whether it's time for him to retire. Not to his face, of course, but already speculation has emerged about candidates to replace him.

Salivating in the wings, some say, is Scott Walker, who hopes the voters in Waukesha will not criticize but appreciate how his ineptitude as county executive has weakened Milwaukee County.

If Walker wants out of his current role, and he clearly does, only the Sensenbrenner seat offers a way up.

But pushing Sensenbrenner out is something few Republicans would directly attempt, even as they quietly talk about it. He still has a legendary reputation for stubbornness and vindictiveness, and for being tone deaf to the thunderclaps of change.

Unless that rumble comes from his own voters.

### New Years Address, 2007

In the midst of a cold and bitter winter we welcome a new chapter of life. We look back on 2006 and wonder what we might have done differently. We look forward to 2007 and pledge to do better.

2006 has been very difficult for our leaders, our military, and everyone else who cares about the future of war and peace. While lives are lost thousands of miles away, the minds and the hearts of Americans have long been at war here at home. This war has pitted American against American. The hawks want war and the doves want peace. Republicans and Democrats dispute strategy, withdrawal plans, and whether all our troops should come home immediately. Because people who love our country can disagree on what the problems are and how to solve them, patriots have turned against patriots. It is a sad time for America. But, there is hope. There is always hope.

2007 will be the year that we take powerful strides towards peace. Americans are far stronger when they stand united, and we must unite for peace. Fighting for peace is brave and noble. Bringing peace without war, however, is genius inspired by compassion. In 2007, we will use our collective genius to find a way to bring peace without first taking more lives. We will find peace in Afghanistan and Iraq. We will deliver peace to the welcoming arms of a grateful America.

As we work towards peace, we can raise our spirits by being thankful that we are among the world's most fortunate people. In spite of war, grandparents will hold grandchildren and tell them old stories made new. Sweethearts will sit beneath the moon and the stars and fall in love for time eternal. Children will find wonder in things that adults can't even see. People will gather at places of worship or halls of justice to witness one man and one woman become one couple. Babies will say their first words and learn to walk. Americans will learn that even war cannot stop the love that is a part of every day life here in the Land of Freedom.

Happy New Year!

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## Safety

From Page 1

injuries affecting thousands of breadwinners - went unreported because the victims were immigrants: Poles, Gambians, Mexicans, Dominicans, Ecuadorians, and Eastern Europeans. They were not more prone to injury, investigators say. They were perhaps more prone to trust in a new country and a new employer.

They were in many cases the victims of shortcuts by developers and their contracting firms during a major boom in condo, office and skyscraper building, even while developers have sought to repeal or restrict the safety rules in place.

**I**BM - Workers and retirees long worried that high-end computer development carried health risks. They now have scientific evidence in a study pushed by the CWA and conducted by Boston University. It confirmed that overall cancer-related mortality is considerably higher among workers engaged in manufacturing computers and component parts when compared with the general population. For years, the advocates point out, the worry about higher cancer was dismissed as "idle shop floor talk."

**B**utter flavor - Cases ranging from Wisconsin to California are demanding attention to the artificial butter flavor added to so many of our supermarket products like pastries and microwave popcorn. The culprit has been identified as diacetyl, an ingredient natural in small doses in butter but manufactured (in largely non-union facilities) as a powder handled in bulk by workers and added as flavoring to foods.

Older workers have reported loss of vision and lung damage. Younger workers, including a 34 year old in Milwaukee, have been diagnosed with bronchiolitis obliterans, a devastating disease that can literally obliterate 70% of lung capacity and lead to death without a lung transplant.

In the 1960s, the FDA pronounced diacetyl a "reasonably safe" food additive that did not require regulation. Health researchers have petitioned OSHA in vain to monitor its use and the FDA to rethink its stand.

**T**here are other cases of exposure to hazardous metals and chemicals that researchers are getting their hands around, often in the face of organized resistance by well-heeled corporate lobbyists and lawyers. Many can be solved by clear safety procedures, yet it has been hard since 2000 to get a sympathetic public ear.

*THE MILWAUKEE COUNTY LABOR COUNCIL IS WORKING WITH SCIENTISTS AND BUSINESSES TO DEVELOP STANDARDS ON ONE SUCH IMPORTANT ISSUE, MANGANESE FUMES. DETAILS WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN A FEW MONTHS.*

Historic neglect and emerging issues will be forcefully presented by the AFL-CIO and its allies to the new Congress.

Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), who has taken over the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, is already pushing to strengthen whistle-blower protection, increase penalties for repeat safety violators, and establish rigorous oversight on OSHA and MSHA for new standards and enforcing neglected old ones.

Unions are also pledging that they will never forget what workers just went through.

# An insider's human look at OSHA

**P**atrick Ostrenga's laptop has a PowerPoint on steroids that humanized the issues of workplace safety and compliance January 12:

- Video of fatal workplace accidents as they happen.
- Another of a young worker's hands being crushed in a press while untrained colleagues scurry around helplessly.
- Slides of statistical lack of prevention - and costs -- that stunned even the knowledgeable assembly of management, industry lawyers and labor leaders at the monthly luncheon of the Labor and Employment Relations Association (LERA).
- Photos of the aftermath at the downtown Falk plant explosion, revealing the scope of the disaster even as OSHA and others continue the investigation.
- Anecdotes from Ostrenga's veteran career as a compliance specialist for the Occupation Safety and Health Administration. The career that has taken him from the investigator who helped OSHA win two US Supreme Court cases to his current duties as teacher and motivator on



Patrick Ostrenga

workplace safety.

**I**n Ostrenga's presentation, the work today almost seems a direct threat to his youth as combat medic. The legal realities also emerged as a complicated and sometimes frustrating game.

"I'm not exactly happy to have on my resume three cases of three workplace fatalities, but there it is," Ostrenga said.

Despite that, he points out, Wisconsin is far lower in workplace fatalities compared with other states, particularly those with state-run inspection programs.

Wisconsin, he speculated, reports a higher number of workplace violations because the state has a tougher standard of regulation and compliance and gives OSHA a freer cooperative hand.

Even out-of-state contractors marvel at the high work ethic in Wisconsin -- but that sometimes works against compliance with safety rules and equipment. The state has many workers that just want to get the job done and take safety chances, he suggested.

- Other points:
- Inspections are by surprise and sometimes companies make

OSHA experts cool their heels. Or OSHA experts have difficulty in getting direct private interviews with potential witnesses on complaints or to help their immediate scrutiny. But other companies are highly focused on safety cooperation.

- Whistleblower protection is important. There was merit in 23% of such complaints, 95% of which resulted in settlements.

- Motor vehicle accidents lead the death parade. They kill nearly six employees in the US every day, but offsite accidents are nearly 75% more than on-site. Such offsite crash injuries cost more than \$12 billion a year in everything from worker's comp to medical and disability costs to insurance.

- The blockage in applying any ergonomic standards and compliance rules in recent years has a huge cost - 43% of worker comp claims deal with muscle "sprains, stress and tears."

- He had high praise for departed Milwaukee DA E. Michael McCann for his cooperation on worksite access in potentially criminal situations "and I hope and fully expect that will continue under his successor (John Chisholm)."

- Since it was founded in 1971, OSHA conservatively has saved 75,000 lives and prevented millions of injuries, but in recent years its staff has been cut by one third.

- With only 2,000 employees, Ostrenga noted with acerbic humor, OSHA can inspect every worksite under its jurisdiction "once in every 166 years."

- Visit [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov) -- "It's one thing we do right," he said.

## Keys to better safety laws

**S**tronger mine safety legislation, even diluted from the concept pushed by Senate and House Democrats, is the noted exception to the Bush hit parade of worker safety failures. But the mine saga offers instruction on how to get stronger worker safety legislation through.

First, Congress couldn't dodge it. Not after headline-making tragedies in mine explosions opened 2006. Not a few months after Hurricane Katrina - where the Republican Congress paid an enormous price for trusting administration concepts, Not a few months before key midterm elections.

The tragedies took place in the wheelhouse of powerful lawmakers, such as Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), and in the face of longstanding ignored complaints by the United Mine Workers of America, a union that no longer represents the majority of coal mine workers but still dominates in pushing simple inexpensive technological devices that would make coal mining much safer.

As Labor Press pointed out last February, the White House was scrambling to keep the coal mine disasters from emerging as yet another example of "the calculated neglect and managerial bungling of Hurricane Katrina." So Congress --- quickly for Congress - passed stiffer standards and Bush signed up, even while continuing to ram industry insiders down Congress' throat

Knowing that Congress would not agree before and would certainly resist his suggestion now, Bush last October made an interim recess appointment of coal executive Richard Stickler to head MSHA (the Mine Safety and Health Administration).

So what did it take in the current political climate? Public awareness and skepticism. Bipartisan pressure. And the tendency of lawmakers to develop a stiffer backbone when they risk being thrown out office

-- DPN

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# Feb. 20 primary floods COPE with candidate choices

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

So many candidates, so little time . . .

Some two dozen members of the Committee on Political Education (COPE) moved quickly January 9, a week after the filing deadline, to interview 12 of the 15 candidates running for Milwaukee School Board, all six of the candidates running for municipal judge (see opposite page) and both candidates running for Branch 26 of the Milwaukee County Circuit Court.

Not all races will be on the primary ballot February 20, though 2007 started off with the specter that all five races for the nine-member Milwaukee School Board would have at least three candidates, forcing a primary runoff.

When nomination signatures shook out January 8, on the eve of the COPE interviews, the Milwaukee Election Commission determined that only three of those seats required a primary. The others will be up for decision in the April 3 general election.

This was still a confounding number of candidates, many first-timers mixed in with familiar names, that the committee had to analyze, vote on and take to the Jan. 11 delegate meeting of the Milwaukee County Labor Council, AFL-CIO, for final approval.

COPE emerged with one resounding endorsement - for incumbent Bill Pocan in a judicial race that won't be on the ballot until April 3. See box.

The committee saw some solid candidates in the crowded municipal judge primary and in the school board contests but

also determined that in the future, for the school board in particular, it should get involved even earlier in recruiting candidates for these four-year terms.

Its dilemma was clearly shared by other community and union groups looking at this broad field. Several were reduced to making multiple recommendations in each school race or also deciding to pass until the primary smoke cleared.

The dilemma here is practical as well as philosophical.

Both the MCLC and groups such as the public teachers union, the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association (MTEA), are facing re-election efforts by incumbents on the board married to failed policies and prone to blame public employees for larger systemic problems.

That was the feeling of the COPE members about District 8 incumbent Joe Dannecker, who faces a lively primary and was characterized as evasive in his COPE interview, and District 2 incumbent Jeff Spence, who on April 3 will face off against an equally familiar name and face in Milwaukee central city politics, Wendell Harris Sr., a former A.O. Smith worker who has run for other offices. Neither Harris nor Spence came in for COPE interviews.

The concern extended, particularly after the interview, to a recent foe of union priorities, Bruce Thompson, who is running for the at-large (citywide) seat and represents the likely repository of campaign contributions from outside voucher groups.

Thompson was ousted from the school board in the last go-round by Jennifer Morales, who survived a flood of campaign literature in her East Side and near

South Side district. Now Thompson hopes to move on to citywide attention in a seat left open by the abrupt resignation last year of Tom Balistrieri.

When confronted in his interview with the failures of the policies he had so actively set in motion in the 1990s, Thompson blamed the administration, not the policies or lack of accountability, noted COPE members.

The philosophies of the candidates were slightly clearer than the practical concerns, even for those candidates whose views aligned with COPE concerns. How hard will they actually work the doors, recruit volunteers and speak candidly at public forums? In some ways, those who survive the primaries will reflect that doggedness.

Unions had successes two years ago when the board members it supported worked as a coalition and mutually supported each other. (Three of the four board members not up for re-election this year gained union support back then -- Morales, Peter Blewett and Charlene Hardin. Only Danny Goldberg didn't receive MCLC backing.)

How actively the candidates who don't have a primary or survive a primary will embrace a cooperative focus remains an unanswered question that primary activism might reveal.

"There are some really sincere people running for school board who are politically naïve about what's involved," noted one COPE member.

The job itself is a test of community commitment as well as handling complexities and parliamentary rules. The pay of \$18,000 a year is more a stipend than an accurate characterization of the sophisticated, double full-

## Pocan is COPE's sole early endorsement

The traditional game in Milwaukee is that few sitting judges face opposition after they win election the first time. The exception is when they're appointed to a vacancy by the governor. Then, the first time they face election, they can draw opposition. The races are ostensibly nonpartisan in the spring, but political realities underlie such contests.

In the case of Branch 26, which will be in contention on the April 3 ballot, COPE was universal in supporting incumbent William Pocan - and not just because he was elevated by Democratic Gov. Jim Doyle last July. "In this case, the governor got it right," said one COPE member.

Pocan, currently assigned to juvenile court, has demonstrated experience, fairness, a sense of humor and balance, and absolutely no hesitation in working to improve the system.

He is opposed by an assistant district attorney, Chris Liegel, who has prosecutorial experience but no track record on the bench as Pocan has. The COPE recommendation was unequivocal - in his understanding, rounded compassion for both victims and the accused, and a caring engaged philosophy in keeping with the best traditions of the judiciary, Pocan deserves support hands down. But don't look for that contest until the April 3 ballot.



William Pocan

time work. The legalities and pressures of school board meetings, rules, preparation and votes take intense preparation and continuity to master.

That may have been a factor in the decision of two school board members that unions opposed in the past to decline to run in 2007.

That threw open the seat occupied by Barbara Horton in District 1, but the survivor there is the luckiest duck of the bunch (and was supported in advance by the MTEA vetting committee).

While three candidates indicated their interest in the race, only Tim Petersons, an MPS parent running for the first time for public office, survived by filing sufficient valid signatures. (600 names was the election commission plateau in northwest side District 1 - citywide races require 1,500 names on the nomination papers.)

Petersons' wife is a public elementary school teacher. Barring some write-in effort, that means Petersons doesn't face a primary and will walk home on April 3.

Also declining to run again was Ken Johnson and that makes his central city District 3 seat a busy place. Four candidates will face off in the primary. One, Markus Watts, failed to fill out a COPE questionnaire or seek an

interview. The other three names have strong constituencies - Michael Bonds, a UWM professor of education, Stephanie Findley, a Democratic Party familiar, and Leon Todd, a frequent candidate for state and city office and a former member of the school board.

In the South Side District 8, Incumbent Dannecker is ripe for picking. He faces the retired schoolteacher who came within a few hundred votes of defeating him before, Terrance Falk, and an active parent who has attracted community support, Tricia Young.

The citywide board race is seven more crowded.

Competing with Thompson is another former school board member (from the 1980s) previously union endorsed, James Koneazny. Also active is a personable novice candidate, Bama Brown-Grice, a technology specialist. Rounding out the field is a former MPS library specialist, Pamela Penn, and an MPS substitute teacher, Gloria Gaston, whose nomination papers were originally rejected by the election commission but reinstated after her protest.

While COPE declined to make primary endorsements in these races, it urged union members to get involved and intends to revisit all the contests after the Feb. 20 results.

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Over in Milwaukee Municipal Court Branch 2, incumbent Derek Mosley must be happy. He is running unopposed.

It's quite different in Branch 3. The retirement after several easy re-election decades of Jim Gramling has opened the floodgates. Six articulate, credentialed lawyers

## All can't be judge

successfully filed for that race.

Several proved strong enough in interviews that COPE found it impossible to make a primary choice - and was

reluctant to confuse its membership further with multiple endorsements. Several planned forums should clarify the community's top choices (two will advance).

It is also a diverse field (see photos above). Jeffrey Norman's name may not be on the ballot because of failure to meet a state deadline on personal disclosure.

## Clifford in crucial Supreme Court race

It is the statewide primary no one expected. It was commonly anticipated that a retirement on the Wisconsin Supreme Court would result in a clear choice in April between progressive Madison lawyer Linda Clifford and a Thompson appointed judge in Washington County, Annette Ziegler.

At the last minute, a lawyer who has bones to pick with the state judicial system submitted the necessary 2,000 names.

Three candidates force a Feb. 20 primary. It will also force both Clifford and Ziegler to pump public appearances and campaign expenditures early into what may prove the priciest judicial race in the state's history.

The race is nonpartisan, but political philosophy is involved. The Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce and other usual GOP suspects are being rounded up behind Ziegler. Her campaign adviser was Mark Green's campaign manager.

Clifford has chosen a more bipartisan approach reflecting her diverse public and private service. Her honorary chairmen are ex-governors, Republican Lee Dreyfus and Democrat

Patrick Lucey. But she is also a Gov. Doyle supporter, a Steelworkers cardholder when she worked summers at Beloit College, a mother who left the state Department of Justice in the 1970s to raise two daughters before becoming a leader at prominent Madison law firms.

Her public service continued as did volunteer work. For years she investigated grievances for the Office of Lawyer Regulation (OLR) and headed important State Bar groups.

She has already earned the backing of the laborers and other building trades unions. She also points out that broad experience with a range of issues is vital on the court, and she has handled many of the hot buttons -- energy, telecommunications, First Amendment and media issues, environment, worker rights.

The third candidate -- no one knows how seriously he will run -- is a Madison criminal attorney, Joseph Sommers, who is involved in the continuing fallout from a vehicular homicide case, where the behavior on both sides led early last December to disciplinary procedures through the aforementioned OLR.

Read into this what you will, but the allegations will be heard by a referee appointed by Wisconsin Supreme Court. Sommers is fighting a 60-day suspension and the assistant Dane County district attorney who combated him has already received a letter of reprimand.

Judicial elections are fairly maddening for the public, since candidates cannot discuss individual cases and potential rulings but flourish track records, personal character and general philosophy. Ziegler, also a mother, has 10 years on the bench and active community volunteerism. Clifford is if anything even more loaded with community service

and honors.

Also maddening is the amount of money spent on such judicial campaigns. The court is split between conservative and liberal camps, as far as anyone can explain those labels.

The departing justice, Jon P. Wilcox, at age 70 held off his retirement to deny Doyle the chance to appoint a replacement.

So there's widespread belief this election will change the philosophical balance. Hence the anticipation of high spending and inventive subjective spinning in TV ads.

The reality of a primary has fueled the fundraising and endorsement process.



Linda Clifford

All announced major unions in the state are supporting the daughter of a Steelworker (and a former summer Steelworker herself), Linda Clifford. The state AFL-CIO will be interviewing candidates and making its endorsement after Labor Press deadlines.

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