



Jobs



Health



Economics



Politics

LEFT TO RIGHT
Politely persistent invaders of the Common Council seek a good jobs ordinance. **Pages 6-7**

Turned down by a hospital because of chronic conditions, workers help introduce the Got Healthcare? challenge to candidates. **Pages 4-5**

Fighting for a fair tax system, Jack Norman will anchor a MALC panel on economics. **Page 3**

Clever signs and skits greeted John McCain in Greendale. **Photos on Page 9**

Unions, communities confront candidates

The labor community has had it. Every election cycle it interviews and recommends candidates who offer lip service or a good stump speech on general principles or dutifully vote in a way that gives them a friendly scorecard with labor's statisticians.

More and more, when these winning candidates are faced with a specific union organizing effort in their district, or are brought union warnings about backdoor amendments from corporate lobbyists, or even asked to defend what organized labor believes in, they bail.

There are some fine public servants to whom this doesn't apply, some who vote out of conviction and concern for human rights.

But let's be honest. Many who have earned the support of

organized labor later have to be cajoled and coaxed toward doing the obviously right thing. Even then, several have disappointed.

Organized labor is a smaller part of today's workforce so many of today's candidates do not come from union families and have not seen firsthand the positive differences in income and quality life that union wages and procedures represent.

Some are tempted to serve many masters. Some take the donations and run.

No more. Not for the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

Starting this election cycle, Milwaukee area candidates for the state legislature, both incumbents and challengers who are interested in getting organized labor's donations, endorsements and ground troops,

will have to attend a special afternoon training and feedback session Monday, July 14, at Plumbers Local 75 Hall, 11175 W. Parkland Ave.



Wacker

This is an invitation tantamount to a command for anyone seeking a legislative seat in Milwaukee, Ozaukee and Washington counties. And "anyone" means regardless of previous support or rejection.

In an important election year where union issues and election experience are ratcheted up even higher than usual, half the state

senate and all members of the assembly are up for grabs November 4. Many contests will feature primary opponents earlier, on Sept. 9.

If candidates want to be considered for the labor process -- questionnaire, interview and assessment by the area's unions through the Committee on Political Education (COPE) -- they have to attend the information and training forum July 14 from 3 to 5 p.m., including a question and answer period.

Experts in several areas of

union concern will guide the candidates through an overview, presentation and issues. Likely topics include:

- **Prevailing wage**, handled by a representative from the building trades.
- **TABOR laws and taxes**, outlined by an AFSCME expert.
- **Wage liens** -- an increasing concern as banks and businesses put other businesses first in line and garnish workers' wages -- will be discussed by a member of the manufacturing sector.

Legislators, continued **Page 8**

Food tickets still the Laborfest bargain but those ticket booths will vanish

Every Laborfest brings some changes. But one change for Labor Day 2008 that could disorient veteran festgoers will actually make getting food and drink faster and easier:

No ticket booths.

No tickets at all sold openly on the grounds during Laborfest, noon to 5 p.m. Monday, September 1, following the 11 a.m. parade through downtown.

Tickets will be sold in advance to unions. The bargain for unions and partners is a continuation of tradition, discounts in the ticket price. They can be purchased in bulk for 90 cents on the dollar.

The vendors on the grounds will welcome these \$1 tickets as they would cash.

But for the first time, the vendors will also treat cash like cash.

Visitors to the free-admission festival who don't have tickets or run out can purchase food and drink using real green -- or credit cards, or cash acquired through the multiple ATMs at Maier Festival Park.

For Laborfest, cold hard cash now becomes a new way to eat and drink after decades of requiring

tickets for the assortment of food and beverage provided by dozens of regular vendors, way stations and bars familiar at Summerfest and other ethnic festivals.

The Milwaukee Area Labor Council happily concedes this is a break from tradition.

Particularly the tradition of long lines at the ticket booths before getting into line at your favorite vendor.

It also eliminates the tradition of running to the ticket booth before you can treat your friends to a

Laborfest continued **Page 2**



CBTU again ahead of pack

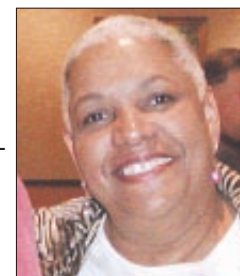
From a Milwaukee perspective, the 37th annual convention of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists in St. Louis delivered a significant honor to the local labor council's Sheila Cochran by elevating her to the CBTU international executive council and honoring her on awards night.

From a national perspective, meeting May 29 before Barack Obama had wrapped up the Democratic nomination for president and before Hillary Clinton had suspended her campaign, the CBTU was already moving organized labor to vowing togetherness and getting on to the hard work no matter who had the numbers -- register voters and educate and mobilize unions.

From across the country and representing all colors, senior-level labor leaders dismissed any fears of divisions in the Democratic Party and challenged the rank and file to actively work to elect Democratic candidates Nov. 4.

That the presidential choice turned out to be Obama was just what the CBTU had ordered, because it had been a strong year of differing views in many unions.

In 2007, Obama had appeared personally at the convention and he clearly grabbed the support of the assembled even though Clinton had most of the national leadership of individual unions that were represented at the conference (while the AFL-CIO itself stayed neutral).



Cochran

CBTU continued **Page 2**

Wal-Mart can't rent this tax loophole

Governor Doyle's signature makes it law: The specific real estate gimmick Wal-Mart (and others) have been using to avoid the Wisconsin corporate income tax is now illegal.

The legislature closed the tax scam as part of the Budget Adjustment Bill and Doyle signed it into law on May 16. Doyle wrote that the new law "closes an unacceptable tax loophole used by multinational corporations to shift profits out of the state to avoid paying Wisconsin taxes." This shuts down the use of an intricate tax technique that avoids taxes by having one branch of a company pay rent to another, a paperwork maneuver that results in major tax breaks.

It's a relatively small fix estimated to bring in about \$15 million during this biennium, but an important first step in needed corporate tax reform. The Wisconsin State AFL-CIO and the Institute for Wisconsin's Future and other coalition allies have pushed to close this loophole. It follows an aggressive campaign to keep the issue of corporate tax avoidance very visible to lawmakers and the public.

(The use of the REIT loophole, as it is known, employed by companies to escape basic tax burdens, was exposed first by the Wall Street Journal and subsequently became a battle cry by unions and community groups opposing Wal-Mart's inroads into communities.)

There had been some doubt about whether Doyle would make changes in the legislation sent him because it differed from



On a televised Fourth Street Forum on taxes, Jack Norman (left) commanded facts and vision more effectively than state legislators Mary Lazich (R-New Berlin) and Jason Fields (D-Milwaukee). Norman joins an economic forum for the labor council July 2 and his analysis of nonprofit hospitals figures in a story on Page 5.

the proposal Doyle himself had made. The legislature's version went beyond closing REIT, the "captive Real Estate Investment Trust" gimmick that Wal-Mart uses. It also includes restrictions on using deductions for interest -- not just rent -- to avoid paying taxes, and also extends beyond traditional corporations to include individuals, S-corporations and insurers.

Doyle noted that there had been some concerns from the business sector about whether the law would prohibit certain "legitimate intra-company loans." Doyle said he will make sure that the law is interpreted so as not to interfere with these legitimate transactions.

Still undecided is the fate of Wal-Mart's past use of this tax loophole.

The Department of Revenue is seeking back taxes on almost \$105 million in Wal-Mart profits from 1997 through 1999 and the

case is before the state's Tax Appeal Commission.

Corporate tax loopholes force working families and smaller businesses to pay much more than their fair share in taxes to make up the difference. The state needs to take a closer look at Wisconsin's outdated tax structure, which is being gamed by aggressive corporate tax avoidance strategies.

This report was prepared May 29 by Phil Neuenfeldt, Secretary-Treasurer of the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO and Jack Norman, Research Director of the Institute for Wisconsin's Future

Economic forum expands monthly delegate meeting

HOW BAD DOES IT HAVE TO GET BEFORE WE DO SOMETHING?

There are several reasons for delegates to invite friends and even folks they argue with to the July 2 monthly meeting, which has been opened up into a forum with experts on "Wrong Directions for the Economy."


First, you're probably staying close to home anyway this Fourth of July given gas and food prices, stagnant wages and so forth. Much better to understand clearly what's happening and bluntly what can be done about it in a vital election year.

Also, as so many stories in this Labor Press indicate, people are taking to the streets on all manner of issues affecting union and non-union families. So rather than beating up blindly on public officials, come to the July 2 meeting to assemble the facts and arguments.

Details of panel members were still being set as our newspaper went to press, but the emphasis is gathering specialists who are knowledgeable and crowd-stirring for the free event that starts at 6:30 p.m. that Wednesday at American Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

Among those committed are Jack Norman, for years the outstanding business reporter at the Milwaukee Journal and a union leader at that company, later known as an expert on government education policy, now in demand as an advocate for good tax policies as research director for the Institute for Wisconsin's Future.

"Wrong Directions for the Economy" will offer candor and clarity on such concerns as trade, taxes, prices, wages and corporate behavior. And why so few people can afford vacations anymore.



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Which candidates flee the healthcare cow?

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

As John McCain discovered during a May 29 stop in Milwaukee, he and all the other candidates for state and federal offices will be shadowed from now until November 4 . . . by a cow.

It's a friendly-looking cow. It's human-sized. It doesn't moo or chew its cud. Rather, it sort of tilts its furry head and waves at crowds.

But it is hardly a contented cow.

It's been created to force politicians to confront and explain in detail where they stand in what is emerging as the No. 1 issue in this election year, right alongside Iraq.

This healthcare mascot will be the most visible presence at rallies and forums of a concerned community that can hardly be dismissed as some extremist faction.

From polls to office conversations, it is clear -- the citizenry is being clobbered by health costs. It lives in fear of the single illness that will drive the family into bankruptcy. It has heard the horror stories of no care for millions and poor care for even those with insurance. And it expects government to help find a solution.

Ministers, unions, community groups and business advocates are joining this grassroots effort to make sure that every candidate for the Wisconsin legislature, for Congress and president

understands how desperate the struggle has become.

Not just workers but businesses and institutions are banding together because they simply can't afford today's runaway premiums, or because they recognize it is injustice for the United States to remain the only industrialized nation where millions of children and adults are denied affordable, regular health care.

"We don't have a healthcare system, we have a healthcare industry," noted Citizen Action's Robert Kraig, program director who is speeding the cow on its (his? her?) way.

It was not coincidence that Citizen Action unveiled its Got Healthcare? Campaign and cow May 28 at lunchtime within the Bread of Healing Health Clinic of the Cross Lutheran Church in the center of Milwaukee.

A range of leaders spoke while four long tables of citizens were being fed the good meal many can't afford because of the cost of health treatment or the denial of health care. One bus driver with a need for kidney dialysis discussed being turned away from service by the major Aurora run downtown hospital, which turned out to be the same place named by another member of the crowd seeking treatment for lingering diabetic problems.

However, this campaign for bread and healing could have been held at virtually any city factory or school. Peter Blewett, president of the Milwaukee public schools board, held up a

color coded map that emphasized how skewed the system has become.

Only 5% of children in most suburban schools are uninsured, the map indicates, and that drifts up in some closer suburbs. But all the ZIP codes with more than 10% uninsured children are within the city and just two ZIP codes encompass one-quarter of all uninsured. The relationship between low income and no health safety net is yet another burden faced by MPS teachers and counselors.

Guy Costello, the vice president of WEAC, spoke to the issues statewide. Children in Platteville require special language development because their mouths are full of rotten teeth (their teachers arrange a trip to a sympathetic Madison clinic). Students' families - and teachers' families as well -- are forced to choose between decent salaries and healthcare. The people who want "to maintain the status quo in healthcare are powerful but small," Costello noted. "The forces calling for action and reform are united and growing. We will win this battle eventually. It is only a question of when."



The cow intends to hasten the when. There are several overlapping if sometimes differing proposals moving through the state and around the country that combine new ideas with the best of current systems to help the US head toward universal health coverage. Since there is general agreement but no consensus on a single legislative approach, Citizen Action has shrewdly built its healthcare cow campaign around some basics it believes any thinking, progressive official could readily embrace.

Among the guarantees Got Healthcare? wants politicians to sign up for:

- Everyone can get affordable coverage as good as what is provided to state legislators and members of Congress.

- Families can control their own health care decisions, by choosing their doctors and having a choice of high quality public and private plans.

- No one can be denied coverage for any reason, including age, health status, occupation, family history, or preexisting conditions - a reality around the industrial world but almost unheard of in the United States.

- Everyone pays their fair share, including individuals and employers.

- Everyone is asked to do their part to reduce unnecessary health care expenditures by adopting healthier life styles and seeking out primary and preventative care.

Certainly those principles are embodied in Healthy Wisconsin and other proposals, including options suggested by another speaker,

Community Advocates' David Riemer. The basics are clearly part of Barack Obama's approach, as they were in the Hillary Clinton's platform.

But all this presents a problem for moderate Republicans and even concerned conservatives.

Basics listed by Citizen Action are not embodied in the healthcare approach of their standard bearer for the presidency, McCain, who emphasizes continued premium growth and health savings accounts, a devastating combo of high income needed for high savings just to participate.

Each piece of McCain's plan envisions a highly deregulated market for private health providers to play in, providing less coverage for higher deductibles and co-pays. The 158 million Americans who receive their health care through their jobs will see a speedy departure of that system with only a modest tax credit (\$5,000 for families).

Adding \$20 billion to current runaway administrative costs, McCain's approach lures the younger healthier workers out of employer insurance pools to less comprehensive coverage - and bigger burdens for those who stay.

If McCain, a cancer survivor with a pre-existing condition, did not have government coverage, his approach would spit him out of decent coverage.

McCain's prescription for America has been labeled "don't get sick" -- re-emphasizing President Bush's claim that every citizen has been provided a health care plan: -- "just go to the emergency room."

These twins don't have a clue. Does anyone else in the GOP?



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Plumped up by hard facts

Main story on facing page

The health industry - drug companies, hospitals, providers, HMOs - is acknowledged as one of the most powerful, best-heeled lobbying groups in the nation, rivaled only by the oil consortium.

Given that entrenched power, along with cascades of money, being on the right side isn't enough to force progressive changes in the healthcare system. It will take hard work.

But at least the constellations of common sense, of facts and figures, are lining up with the forces of change. Consider just some of the new studies entering our intelligence.

HOSPITALS -- Non-profit hospitals are freed from paying property tax, largely because of the belief that they pay the community back in charity work and public relations campaigns.

But listen to the common stories of the uninsured denied care, of the mentally ill neglected or abandoned, of parents denied care because of a lack of insurance, of hours on the phone trying to figure out charges, of refusal to accept Medicare because the payment rates are too low to cover that waterfall in the hospital lobby, of physicians as co-owners accused of steering clients to certain tests.

Maybe such "non-profits" don't need such a free ride.

It is a case made passionately and factually in TV and community forums by Jack Norman, research director of the Institute for Wisconsin's Future (www.wisconsinfuture.org), brandishing a May report on Wisconsin's 124 non-profit hospitals. *Also see Page 3.*

It is homeowners and businesses in a community that are forced to pick up the hospitals' share for the police, fire, transit, road maintenance, schools and other basic government systems the hospitals themselves rely on.

Norman is on a mission for a modernized fair tax system. "Hospital Taxes" is yet another study that debunks the myth that what Wisconsin nonprofit hospitals do as charity balances out exempting six billion dollars worth of property that could be generating at least \$117 million a year in property taxes.

The report shows hospital by hospital what the savings on homeowner taxes would be if the



system changed. It also details that large non-profit hospitals are often indistinguishable in their operations from for-profit hospitals in such areas as executive salaries, charitable care and annual revenue surpluses.

NURSES -- Another new report reinforces concerns about these hospitals' basic quality and came from another speaker at the Citizen Action event May 28.

Candice Owley, president of the Wisconsin Federation of Nurses & Health Professionals, AFT, AFL-CIO, pointed to a new survey of union and non-union nurses who may be losing the struggle to provide quality care because of inadequate staffing, too much overtime, even lack of meal breaks and other policies leading to increasing fatigue and errors among nurses.

More than 1,500 nurses responded to the Milwaukee area survey and more than 500 knew of "examples of errors that have occurred as a result of nurse fatigue," noted Owley.

The survey also found that 70% of the responding hospital nurses would worry about the quality of care their own family members would receive at their own hospitals. More than 90% of hospital nurses said there are units at their own hospitals they consider unsafe for patients.

The WFNHP has long been a leader in improving patient to nurse ratios, and sensible working conditions. The union's standards have led non-union hospitals to belatedly follow suit.

REGULATORS -- Nationally, healthcare costs to consumers have doubled since 2000. In Wisconsin they have gone up another 23% beyond that average increase.

There are many factors, but the percentages alone have raised suspicion that the state overseers are simply not doing enough to control charges in the health insurance market.

Now comes the facts in a first of its kind national survey.



Citizen Action on June 12 detailed the Wisconsin conclusions of a national survey by Families USA, conducted by insurance commissioners demanding that each state respond in detail to 14 concerns.

The survey is the first to examine the regulatory efforts taken by every state to curb abuses in the individual health insurance market.

Wisconsin flunked.

The lack of state protections may benefit insurance company profits but they burden consumers, noted Citizen Action in a media conversation joined by US Rep. Steve Kagen and such state officials as Sen. Kathleen Vinehout and Rep. Jon Richards.

Wisconsin has no authority to protect consumers from such abuses as denial of health coverage by insurance companies to people with pre-existing conditions, refusal to pay for services needed to treat common ailments -- and companies can even yank policies if a consumer faces a rash of medical bills.

Small business owner Remy Ceci from Pepin related how, because of a cancer condition, he was unable to buy health insurance for 19 years.

"Our Constitution protects all citizens - even those who are ill -- against discrimination, and it is

FAR LEFT: Supporters line up behind the cow mascot.

LEFT: MPS' Blewett discusses children at risk.

BELOW: Speakers at the launching event included (from left) the Rev. Ken Wheeler of the hosting Cross Lutheran Church, Community Advocates' David Riemer, the nurses' president, Candice Owley, and Guy Costello, vice president for both WEAC and Citizen Action.



time to establish this fundamental principle in health care," said Kagen, who is also a physician.

"If it is in your body it should be covered."

The "Failing Grades" study reviews whether key protections are provided to prevent insurance company abuses in Wisconsin, as well as each of the other 49 states and the District of Columbia. The full report is available at www.familiesusa.org/resources/publications/reports/failing-grades.html

Among its revelations:

Only five states prohibit all insurance companies from cherry-picking the healthiest consumers and excluding everyone else. Wisconsin allows such cherry-picking.

In 35 states and the District of Columbia, including Wisconsin, there are no limits on how much insurers can increase premiums based on an individual's health status.

In 21 states and the District of Columbia, insurers can exclude coverage for pre-existing conditions for more than one year. In Wisconsin there is no time limit on how long coverage can be excluded.

"Sen. John McCain has promoted unregulated individual health insurance policies as a hallmark of his health care platform, and he would seek to remove those few protections still in place in some states" noted Linda Honold, executive director of Citizen Action.

"This might be great news for insurers, but it's a tragedy for families trying to protect their health and personal resources in an already unfriendly marketplace."

"The last thing the health care system needs is a new wild-west mentality that simply throws everyone into the individual marketplace with little or no protection."

-- Dominique Paul Noth

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Coalition pushes city to leverage good jobs

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

Wearing red T-shirts embossed with "Jobs Jobs Jobs," they were retirees, pastors, organizers and workers of collars white, blue and green.

All filled the spectators' benches at the City Hall's ornate Common Council chambers June 10 -- not to say anything but just to be there.

The aldermen and one woman who comprise the voting body had better get used to those T-shirts. They will bear witness at every general meeting that the Common Council holds, underlining the ordinance the citizens are preparing for introduction. It is an ordinance to make the city do what it said it would -- and must -- with "our money," as the backers put it.

The folks developing the ordinance think most elected officials and their executive hires have been sitting on their hands or are being led around by the nose on the issue of jobs. But the need has grown to a crisis, with statistics showing nearly 50% of working age black males in Milwaukee unemployed.

The organizers know something else.

You clean up after floodwaters by going into the basements and clearing the muck.

You rid neighborhoods of violence and gangs by working side by side with residents and safety officers.

And you develop jobs only by similar insistence, rules, time, clarity and energy. If enough citizens devote 15 minutes a day for



Ald. Ashanti Hamilton surrounded by jobs T-shirts and supporters in the Common Council chambers

six months to talking to neighbors, putting up signs, being trained on the issues and confronting the aldermen at every turn, "we can win this battle."

So say leaders of the two main sponsoring groups: MICAHA (Milwaukee Inner City Congregations Allied for Hope) and GJLN (Good Jobs and Livable Neighborhoods Coalition), which is led by professional experts and has also turned to national models and organizations for advice.

The ordinance is being written after years of pleading and arguing by these and other community coalitions for City Hall to put teeth behind its own

announced major goal: Attracting and retaining family supporting jobs, noted Pamela Fendt, director of GJLN.

No one denies that has become an even bigger task of late. First there were years of delay, now there is a national economy sinking like a stone and federal statistics showing the city of Milwaukee losing jobs since 2004 rather than growing them.

Mayor Barrett has seized control from the county of a Workforce Investment Board to sweep in more federal and private money. But City Hall also has a very busy Department of City Development (DCD) and a Redevelopment Authority (RACM) with economic incentives of their own - and there's where the community has gotten exasperated.

The proposed MICAHA Good Jobs Ordinance would force the city itself to take the lead in what it keeps promising and avoiding -- residential preference in hiring for any taxpayer supported development; best practices in raising workers out of poverty; high standards in training so that workers are prepared to keep skilled jobs; prevailing wage as the rule, and a legally required

leap to connect companies seeking workers to residents who want the jobs and can do them.

Though constantly polite, Fendt does not disguise her irritation that DCD's director, Rocky Marcoux, allowed a major report on 2007 TIFs to go to a key zoning committee without one mention of what city regulations make the primary mission of such projects -- attracting and retaining family supporting jobs.

"MICAHA and GJLN believe government power can be used to make good policy," said Fendt, but here they have to "agree with the Public Policy Forum critique that DCD has supported real estate development without regard or attention to the employment aspects."

(TIFs divert property taxes to infrastructure and other financing gaps in development projects, allowing a lower cost now and a bigger payout for the city in the future.)

While it is important for the Common Council to understand the impact of TIFs on the tax base, Fendt suggests those statistics were easier for Marcoux to explain than the human side of the equation: What happened to the job emphasis? What happened to residential preference in hiring and belief in prevailing

wage - not just in putting up the building but in the jobs inside?

DCD's approach to creating TIFs is also causing growing disturbance to the unions of the Milwaukee Building & Construction Trades Council, AFL-CIO.

They want minority apprentices - as a story last month indicated, they are the ones working successfully at it. They want residential preference in hiring while maintaining quality standards. As one Marquette Interchange worker put it, "I don't want untrained people dying out here just to make the city look better in its statistics."

But the unions feel those basic goals have just become a poker game for DCD to make deals. Lyle Balistrieri, construction council president, worries that "DCD is trying to use prevailing wage as a bargaining chip. It's not a basic belief to them."

Fendt and Epps' group made its mark by fighting for community benefits for Park East developments and were rebuffed by the Common Council despite promises - a two-facedness that still stings four years later with a different council.

But those ideas were accepted by the county board, which owns more Park East land, and those goals are now shaping up as a help not hindrance.

Trapshooting

After 9 weeks of shooting in the Milwaukee Area Labor Council league, here are the results by team, reflecting wins, losses and ties:

Class AA W-L-T

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IBEW 494-17-2-0
- Pipers
Plumbers Local 75.....2-7-0

Class A

- Wire & Fire2
CWA 46037-2-0
- Pipe Dopes
Plumbers Local 75.....5-3-1
- Blind.....3-6-0
- Wirenuts
IBEW 4942-6-1

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Red job T-shirts will confront the council's new members, Milele Coggs and Nik Kovac, both grads of Riverside High.

Job plan builds on success

Main story on facing page

The MICAH Good Jobs Ordinance deals with an established city success that MICAH itself made happen. It's the Resident Preference Program (RPP), now utilized only on Department of Public Works projects.

Under the ordinance it would be expanded to all development projects that receive public financial assistance. Including TIFs.

MICAH led the effort to establish the RPP program and is leading the charge to expand its reach. The ordinance, through scrutiny, would seek 30% of the workforce on these projects to be the unemployed or underemployed residents of the city.

All these projects would have to follow prevailing wage rules so that Milwaukee uses its tax dollars to create jobs that help people move out of poverty. It is self-evident that the pressure to not pay prevailing wage - applied by developers seeking tax money - can undercut a community's fiscal strength and is symptomatic of businesses willing to push workers down by keeping their own profits up.

(Prevailing wage scales up or down depending on the skill or career involved, but it is established by what more than half the workers in a category and geographic region receive in pay and benefits.)

The ordinance would also maximize apprenticeship ratios and fund the training so that residents will be highly qualified to compete for the job opportunities created by their tax dollars.

The MICAH Good Jobs Ordinance, its backers say, represents the sort of incentives governments can do -- and today's crisis requires them to do.

Consider that in the 1970s, Milwaukee had the highest per capita income for African-American's of any US city. By 2006, says GJLN's Jennifer Epps, "We were voted the worst city in America to be black."

Things are bad nationwide. The percentage of long-term unemployed (18.3%) is far higher than when Congress last

extended federal benefit extensions -- 14% in October 1991 and 14.9% in February 2002.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that roughly 3.5 million workers will exhaust their regular state benefits in 2008 without finding work

Yet things are worse yet for Milwaukee minorities.

Black households in Milwaukee earn \$494 for every \$1,000 earned by white households

Blacks living in Milwaukee are four times more likely to be unemployed than their white neighbors.

Backers of the Good Job Ordinance also point out that family supporting jobs are the one proven solution to a host of other problems Milwaukee faces. Turning our tax dollars from waste to help also immediately addresses such issues as crime, hunger, homelessness, health care, stable families and education.

Candidly, supporters want citizens to do more than put on a T-shirt and stand guard over the Common Council's response.

There are other ways to help. For information contact GJLN at 633 S. Hawley Rd., Suite 115, (414) 443-0682, or email jepps@communitybenefits.org.

What pulls labor to special Sunday

On a Sunday morning in early September, Leon Burzynski a labor leader and Catholic, went into Ss. Peter and Paul's Church on Milwaukee's East Side -- for three masses. That was no ordinary Sunday. It had a special meaning: Labor Day Sunday.

Although Labor Day weekend has so often been painted over by department store sales and last minute vacations, the actual reason behind the creation of this holiday was always to celebrate the worker. True to form, Burzynski, a speaker in the Labor in the Pulpits program, stood as a reminder of why we celebrate by witnessing to the need for good paying jobs that respect everyday people's rights.

In Milwaukee, Leon was not the only one speaking out in 2007, as he will again in 2008. Every year about 100 area congregations involved with Faith Community for Worker Justice invite union members and workers to share their stories of the importance that organized labor plays in advancing human rights for all.

Worker rights are always a matter of human rights, and no matter what religion we are all part of, there must be a high degree of importance placed upon the dignity of workers.

To get your congregation involved contact your local International Worker Justice affiliate.

In Milwaukee that is the Faith Community for Worker Justice, 633 S. Hawley Rd., Milwaukee, WI 53214, or call (414) 771-7541, or email mclcfaiith@ameritech.net.

Author Jon Royal came to the faith community as an intern in summer, 2007, but to the great advantage of Milwaukee citizens he decided to stay around for more than year to help on a number of projects.

Royal departs in July but his replacement intern has already arrived from Nebraska. She is Heather Robertson.




Departing faith intern Jon Royal at right (who wrote the accompanying story) helps pack up supplies for the 22 homeless shelters that benefited from the labor council's annual Health & Hygiene Drive. On June 5, at United Way headquarters, near tables bulging with the results of the collection, organizers of the campaign, the AFL-CIO community service liaisons, and other leaders handed out thank-yous. Singled out for notice were the teachers and students of MPS. **BELOW:** Among those who spoke (and helped pack) were children from Audubon and Golda Meir schools.



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Legislators

From Page 1

• **EFCA:** The service sector unions will define and clear up the misconceptions surrounding the Employee Free Choice Act, which has whipped through the House and is facing more difficult hearings in the Senate, along

with a well-heelled advertising blitz by agents of the US Chamber of Commerce.

This forum is a serious pre-condition for the legislative candidates. It is fully supported by the expanded executive board and is being organized by board members Scott Redman of the plumbers

and Annie Wacker, vice president of MALC.

It is a recognition born of experience that unions "are not going to back people unless they understand the core concerns and missions of unions," said Wacker.

It also reflects changing times. If candidates haven't grown up with deep commitment to union concerns and missions, if they are being yanked between the polarizing views of businesses that need workers and workers who need businesses, well, unions have to make an effort to inform and educate.

That includes basic truths, such as union jobs credited with adding 60,000 other jobs to Los Angeles' economy. That today's minimum wage, adjusting for inflation, is lower than it was in the 1950s, which was not so coincidentally the heyday height of union membership.

America needs more than ever the principles of unions and the growth they represent for the middle class. The legislative candidates need to know that, the COPE strategists insist.

Unions also pull more than their natural weight in Wisconsin elections (17% of the workforce here is union but one-quarter of the voters come from union households).

When a candidate catches the enthusiasm and has the full-throated support of union leaders and rank and file, sophistication in such flyers, phone banks and Internet activism matters more than geographic density.

The Milwaukee COPE has always run the questionnaire, interview, recommendation procedure, but this year it expands to all three counties.

It is the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO that issues final endorsements for state contests through its statewide COPE, but those union leaders rely on the local council and it is rare indeed for the state to go against the

MALC decisions. It's also foolish, since MALC has the organizational skills and the ear of the rank and file.

As Wacker points out, "Candidates who want to go through our process must attend this forum as we will only be scheduling later COPE interviews on that day."

Sheila Cochran, the MALC secretary-treasurer, has made it clear to state AFL-CIO leaders, with whom she closely consults, that the Milwaukee council will not even back anyone who doesn't go through the July 14 event.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

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Calendar

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

Sunday, June 29

St. Ben's Community Meal Program
Annual cookout for homeless and hungry.
5 p.m., St. Ben's church, 9th and State.
Contact Mike Balistriere at (414) 771-9829

Wednesday, July 2

MALC Delegate Meeting
Combined With Economic Forum
Open invitation. See Page 3.
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

Monday, July 7

Laborfest Planning Meeting
All invited to help plan, coordinate
Sept. 1 Laborfest.
5 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Monday, July 21

Faith Community for Worker Justice
Monthly meeting main agenda: Labor in the Pulpits
4 p.m., Yatchak Hall, 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Monday, Tuesday July 28-29

COPE Interviews, Meeting
By invitation, both days.
Yatchak Hall, 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Wednesday, August 6

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

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LEFT: Among the unions joining the Stamporee were the machinists (top left) and SEIU (at left).

SPOOFING PRESIDENTIAL POSTURING – The traffic stoppers May 29 along 76th St. in Greendale were actors assembled by One Wisconsin Now and supported by extensive labor turnout – from left, Cindy McCain, John McCain (who in reality was a few yards away in a screened town hall) and President Bush, the latter two in rubber masks. A Condaleeza Rice clone was also dancing around for skits in the “Stamporee,” demonstrating how many proposals of the presumptive GOP presidential nominee were rubber stamp-dancing with Bush’s policies. Less humorous protesters circled the fringe of the rally, but the central antics drew the passersby and the laughter. Sponsors vow to greet McCain in this manner whenever he whips through.

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Utah's passing stirs fond memories

Utah Phillips rode the rails, discovering America from the ground up after the Korean War. From such experiences he developed his songwriting skills, wicked one-liners and devotion to labor and peace causes, often masked by his reputation as a troublemaker and rabble-rouser.

For six decades he tirelessly visited towns and cities to stir the masses, but he has not toured much in recent years. It was doctors' orders.

It was no surprise, then, though an occasion for much sadness, when he finally succumbed to chronic heart disease May 23 at age 73, surrounded by family and friends at his home in California.

That heart condition didn't keep him from visiting Milwaukee in April of 2007 for a Pabst Theater concert, to attend labor events and visit some old friends such as fellow folksong icon Larry Penn.

Penn, who toured with Utah as well as joining concerts here, has written a brief personal remembrance for the Wisconsin Labor History Society. One excerpt: "While Utah was all those things you read about in his press clippings and then some, I would rather remember

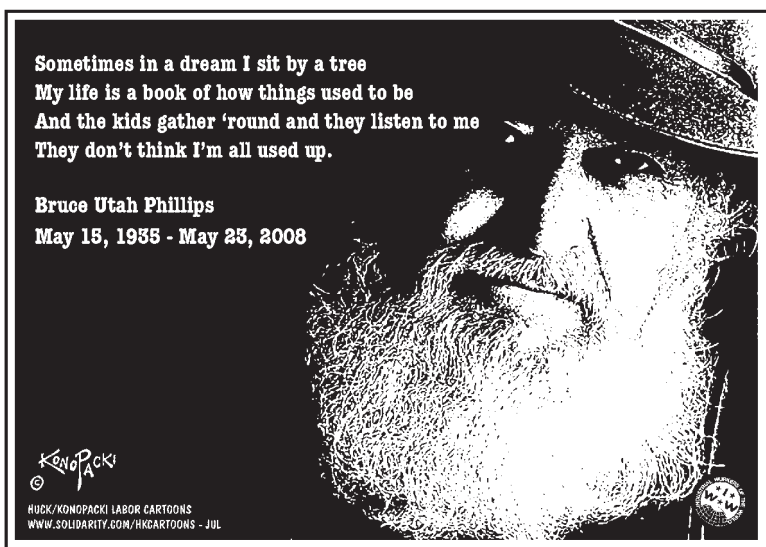


On his last Milwaukee concert visit in April of 2007, Utah Phillips (left) went to see the Bay View Tragedy marker with Milwaukee's own folk legend, Larry Penn.

him as a friend -- a drinking buddy and a brother on the road."

Utah first gained national recognition with the talking-word humor of "Moose Turd Pie" in 1973. But his combination of humor, melody and social insights extended his reputation for individuality and even imp-

ishness (he was the self-named "Golden Voice of the Great Southwest") -- not just in concerts and commentary but in songs recorded by the likes of Emmylou Harris, Tom Waits, Joan Baez, Arlo Guthrie and Waylon Jennings. So distrustful was he of American corporations, however, he turned down



offers from mainstream labels. Born Bruce Phillips (he took the name "U. Utah" in honor of one of his musical idols, T. Texas Tyler) he ran away from home as a teenager and at 20 served in the Korean War, an experience that changed him into what he called a "tramp dreamer" though he was often characterized as a hobo or a bum.

Assuredly he became a pacifist and an anarchist in the classic meaning of those terms. Working diverse jobs, he turned constant road trips and interactions with people and causes into a deepening philosophy, made labor history a living text and kept his activism stirring. He retained devotion to the "Wobblies," the Industrial Workers of the World.

He also retained a sense of mischief even as he took serious aim at social injustice. He ran for senate and the presidency largely to underscore his unhappiness with government. His radio series became an outlet for the needs of working people. The man who once was homeless became known in later years for creating homeless shelters.

The high regard he achieved in the music community was reflected in a benefit concert held

a month before his death in New York State. Ignoring his own health problems Pete Seeger (some 17 years older and rarely performing onstage these days) led the tribute by modern and traditional folk artists.

The Washington Post in its obituary noted how a "new generation discovered him" in the 1990s, when Ani DiFranco edited down about 100 hours of performance tapes, combined them with hip-hop and created "The Past Didn't Go Anywhere" (1996), one of the albums that brought him Grammy nominations in recent years.

The Internet allows his words and music to live on. As do his followers and fans.

Labor 2008 adds to campaign team

Casie Yoder has joined the Wisconsin Labor 2008 team. A recent graduate from the George Washington University, with a major in journalism and a minor in political science, she is already at work as the internal communications director interviewing union and partner leaders and influencing activities around the state.



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Help in foreclosure crisis

The mortgage and foreclosure crisis is not getting better — particularly as the White House keeps throwing back at the proponents efforts at remedy.

High gasoline prices and bulging food prices have become evil twins — triplets when you throw in health costs. But all have combined to increase the rates of bankruptcy. The quiet desperation of so many families became a big story when major financial companies collapsed or suffered billions in losses from speculation in the subprime mortgage market. Some needed a federal bailout. Families have wanted one for years and years.

Not all foreclosures are undeserved, of course. But in an age of acquisition where governments pile on billions in debt and credit card companies shill consumers at every turn, the responsibility is far deeper than the family suckered into a loan.

Unchecked predatory lending practices and a speculative bubble in real estate prices grew the disaster. Today millions of America's homeowners feel the human peril behind headlines in the corporate media. Not since the Depression of the 1930s have so many US homeowners owed more on their mortgages than their homes are worth.

“Defaulting on the Dream,” a report by the Pew Charitable Trusts, explores the crisis and projects that one in 33 current US homeowners may be headed toward foreclosure in the coming years because of subprime loans. (The report can be downloaded: www.pewcenteronthestates.org). But not just homeowners are affected.

Communities suffer as families move out, decreasing the tax base that funds vital local services. In Janesville where General Motors is closing its plant in the next two years, the impact on the community and the workers extends far beyond retail outlets, suppliers and health clinics. The 2,500 employees told to start looking elsewhere have to add mortgage survival to their problems.

Then there are the silent victims. The Brookings Institution projects that, over the next two years, an estimated two million children will be directly impacted by the mortgage crisis as their families lose their homes due to foreclosures. These children are not just losing their homes and their friends, but their education is being disrupted as well.

While Congress, state governments, nonprofit agencies and organizations such as the AFL-CIO work to find long-term answers, many homeowners need help right now in avoiding foreclosure and keeping their homes. Millions of others need to know how to avoid taking out a

loan that will become a problem later.

AFL-CIO writers have collected some of the top tips you can use to keep from losing your home. These tips come from experts such as the federal Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD) and the AFL-CIO Union Privilege program at www.unionprivilege.org. Even the over-extended Freddie Mac offers good tips — it is the federally chartered housing finance corporation.

The most important first step, these experts say:

Don't ignore the problem. Recognize that you need to deal with it. The experts suggest you start by contacting your lender immediately. The farther behind you fall, the harder it will be to set things right. Lenders do not want your house. They have options to help borrowers through difficult financial times. It is also wise for working families to anticipate what is around the corner.

Here are other tips:

- Open and respond to all mail from your lender. The first notices you receive will offer information about foreclosure-prevention options that can help you weather financial problems. Later mail may include important notices of pending legal action. If you find yourself involved in legal proceedings, you won't be able to plead ignorance if the loan holder can show they made diligent efforts to notify you.

- Know your rights. Review your loan documents for the specific language regarding

actions the lender can and cannot take in case of nonpayment. Research the foreclosure laws and time frames in your state (the governmental process is different in each state).

- Talk to a housing counselor.

If you are a union member, you can call the Union Plus Save My Home Hotline, at 1-866-490-5361.

- Be on the lookout for scams. If any company or individual promises they can stop your foreclosure immediately if you sign a document appointing them to act on your behalf, you may well be signing over the title to your property and becoming a renter in your own home. Never sign a legal document without reading and understanding all the terms and getting professional advice. For-profit companies may contact you promising to negotiate with your lender. While these may be legitimate businesses, they will charge you a hefty fee for services your lender or a housing counselor will provide free.

- Set some spending priorities. Review your budget to see where you can cut spending to find the extra cash you need for your mortgage payment—for instance, canceling cable or cell phone service, eliminating entertainment expenses or selling a second car or jewelry.

The AFL-CIO is urging Congress to pass the Homeownership Preservation and Protection Act of 2007 (S. 2452). That establishes new consumer protections and allows state attorneys general to enforce existing strong state laws.

DOL plans frees wage abuse while muzzling unions

What was painfully self-evident to union leaders has now been documented and confirmed by safety and labor expert Ross Eisenbrey, vice president of the Economic Policy Institute (EPI).

President Bush wants to spend nearly 100 times more on unions over employers to confirm that laws are being complied with.

That in effect encourages the miniscule monitoring of federal wage regulations within companies while using the Department of Labor to muzzle organized labor with excessive paperwork.

Eisenbrey went through Bush's fiscal 2009 budget to reveal a totally out of whack approach to spending taxpayer money.

This imbalance is especially difficult to defend because unions make data collection cheap and easy for the government by reporting their financial information directly to the DOL office of labor standards

But employers are not required to report anything to the Wage and Hour Division. Under Bush regulations, the division has to visit each employer individually to enforce the laws it administers, while its staffing to do that continues a downsizing trend, a cut by 21%.

It works out to taxpayers spending \$2,500 per union and union local to assure compliance with the regulations while spending only \$26.08 per employer to do the same.

Eisenbrey is a lawyer who served as policy director of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration from 1999 until 2001.



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