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(USPS 350-360)

Wake up, voters! It's the finish line

By Dominique Paul Noth
Labor Press Editor

For much of Milwaukee, the legislative election is over Tuesday, August 14. Only the residents don't realize it.

In eight contested Assembly districts and one contested Senate district for the Madison legislature, it's only Democrats against Democrats - and winner takes all Aug. 14. The midsummer timing of the primary will sharply cut turnout unless people stir - will you give up vacation plans to vote? Sports tickets? TV shows? There are forces counting on you not caring -- or not even knowing.

Redistricting games have turned familiar polling locations into shuffleboard. Whose district are you in? Bet many citizens don't know. (The Government Accountability Board says polling locations are being added by

Poor tactics unlikely to halt great project

It is a downtown lakefront project everyone thinks dynamic and exciting: All-union construction. Hundreds of skilled construction jobs. The same developer, Rick Barrett, and architectural team behind the successful Moderne, that Park East high-rise opening up to residents next month.

It is a 44-story hotel and apartment complex with its own parking spaces known as The Couture to replace the Downtown Transit Center on Michigan St. near Lake Memorial Drive -- such a strong project that the manner in which it was revealed probably won't halt its progress, since supervisors contacted seem enthusiastic about it.

But the process rather than the project has deepened con-

Couture continued Page 12

local clerks as soon as known at vpa.wi.gov, which means something of a scramble by Aug. 14 given boundary changes in the city and statewide.)

Distinctive ideological differences? Even those don't wait until November when the top Democrat and top Republican face off in other races. There are ideological differences among candidates bearing the same party label, quite noticeable this August.

That means a lot of citizens will wake up August 15 dismayed that they lost a chance to create more aggressive representation, or failed to keep the good fighters from equally strong-minded company -- especially in a year when people finally noticed that who they elect to the Madison legislature makes a profound difference in their daily lives.

Credit Scott Walker and his

minions for being the best recruiting tool the opposition ever had. The GOP heavy hand - heavy to even people in its own party -- broke the historic pattern of just letting the state legislature putter along. Social Darwinism stepped hard on natural evolution.

People who never understood the control that Madison had over tax aid formulas, wage standards, local schools were startled into awareness by the partisan overreach, the emergence of ALEC model national tampering on gun, voter and education standards -- shenanigans that on analysis may not be saving money but costing more down the road. The jury is not only out on that, it hasn't even got the evidence to deliberate.

If the state is waking up to what Madison can do, it still has sand in the eyes -- blind to how

Election continued Page 6



Legislative candidates Sandy Pasch and Nikiya Harris, backed by Robert Kraig of Citizen Action and SEIU's Bruce Coburn, rallied with other progressives to get out the deciding votes Aug. 14.

MEDIA ESCAPE HATCH

Voucher system ducks hard scrutiny

By Dominique Paul Noth, Labor Press Editor

The principal was already in hot water for abusing children and other practices that shut his school down in May. And then in June came a search warrant, a 22 page criminal record and an investigation for child enticement and harmful materials. Testimony existed how he led two juveniles to his home to show off the hooks above his bed used to dominate female visitors (according to the complaint) and then offered to tie one boy up, which sent them running from the house.

You knew about this June 22 only if you glanced at Channel 12 news - since the main newspaper hadn't led with such details when it reported the school closing in May. That was curious. Sex scandals of any flavor sell newspapers and are prized, even exaggerated when police searches don't immediately result in charges. So maybe the education and vice reporters hadn't connected the dots.

But public educators read something darker and deeper, having long dealt with what they call the JS attitude to expose and attack the public education system at any turn and trumpet any hint of salaciousness or failure. Why else would JS recently report seven young deaths from fire, shootings, crashes and the like that had no connection with schooling over the last year -- with a headline that all were MPS students? Seemed quite a reach when you recall the public school responsibility to educate all who apply.

Had the child abusing school story - a K-12 filled with multiple reports of children being beaten, police called in more than 20 times, a principal accused of enticing juveniles to his home for lurid encounters - been about a Milwaukee public school, imagine how speedily reporters would have jumped to tell the tale in headlines three inches high across the top of the front page. Proof not needed. "Public school scandal" would be enough.

But this was a voucher school.

The principal with the long rap sheet who calls himself "Dr." - Corey Daniels - had his private school for low-income families closed twice by the state Department of Public Instruction but found ways to keep it open anyway, to the dismay of the misled parents who hoped the Milwaukee Institute for Academic Achievement would live up to its name or reflect the values expected from the space it occupied within the Grace United Church of Christ, 4920 N. Sherman Blvd.

The placement of the May 28 JS story and the lead caption and paragraph rather tepidly described "unsafe conditions" and "so understaffed that the school leader took children to his home while he worked on 'other things.'" There was little public outrage because "things" were buried far down in the JS story - multiple beatings for instance.

Imagine if such reports involved public schools, though of course these voucher schools also survive

Vouchers continued Page 4



The architect image of The Couture project.

Norman to probe tax fairness in fresh ways

For years Wisconsin citizens have turned to a shoestring operation, the Institute for Wisconsin's Future (IWF), to expose the real tax problems and solutions in the state, relying on the intense research of Jack Norman, former prize-winning lead business reporter for The Milwaukee Journal and actually one of the founders of that newsroom's union.

With leadership from Norman and executive director Karen Royster, the IWF broke the stories of who does not pay corporate taxes in Wisconsin, revealing how some of the richest citizens take full advantage of America's arcane tax rules and freedom to make wealth to escape not just paying fair share of state taxes, but ANY share.

The list was startling - S.C. Johnson enterprises, large banks and manufacturers. It was also embarrassing that a tiny enterprise without a lot of resources, reliant on grants and donations, was doing the exposes that the state's big news organizations with a lot more heft, money and staff had failed to pioneer.



Norman (right, with Lyle Balistreri and Barbara Toles) participated in a budget forum last year as the full weight of Walker's bills landed on Wisconsin.

The IWF continues at wisconsinfuture.org with reports from the state's own research about how, despite the governor's claims, fully two-thirds of the state's school districts will lose resources next year. Expect IWF to continue important work but refocus on education issues and rethink its fund-raising.

Another study - it turned out to be Norman's final blast for IWF - describes how if Paul Ryan's GOP budget were adopted, it would cost Wisconsin \$3.3

billion in federal aid and 26,000 jobs in 2013-'14.

That brings the hint of both bad news and good. While IWF will explore new foundations, grants, contributions and direction, noted board chair Barbara Zach Quindel, money does affect research and IWF has had to respond to deep reductions -- even as thoughtless big money is larded on right-wing campaign efforts. Truth comes at a price.

So Norman and others have quietly revealed that while IWF

will continue, it will be without much of the enterprise and leadership of the last dozen years. Royster and Norman have sadly departed.

The good news, as Norman

revealed in an email and an interview, is he's not going away.

There are new funding sources and new horizons awaiting him, including a deal with Citizen Action of Wisconsin in conjunction with Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF), a 131 year old organization that under director Ken Taylor is known as a leading advocate for families and children and respected analyzer of poverty, taxation and health funding.

Norman and other experts will be working on the Wisconsin Tax Fairness Campaign while he will also start his own consulting business. "As you can see from the information," Norman said, "I will still be working for progressive change."

-- D.P.N.

Calendar

Visit www.milwaukeeelabor.org for updated events

Wednesday, Aug 1

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

Thursday-Sunday Aug 2-12

Union Label Booth
Wisconsin State Fair Exposition Center

Monday, August 6

Laborfest Planning Meeting
All affiliates and members welcome
5 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Tuesday, August 14

Primary Election Decides Many Contests
Polls open 7 a.m.-8 p.m.

check vpa.wi.gov for location by address

Monday, August 23

Final Laborfest Planning Meeting
All affiliates and members welcome
5 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.



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Saunders voted top AFSCME job

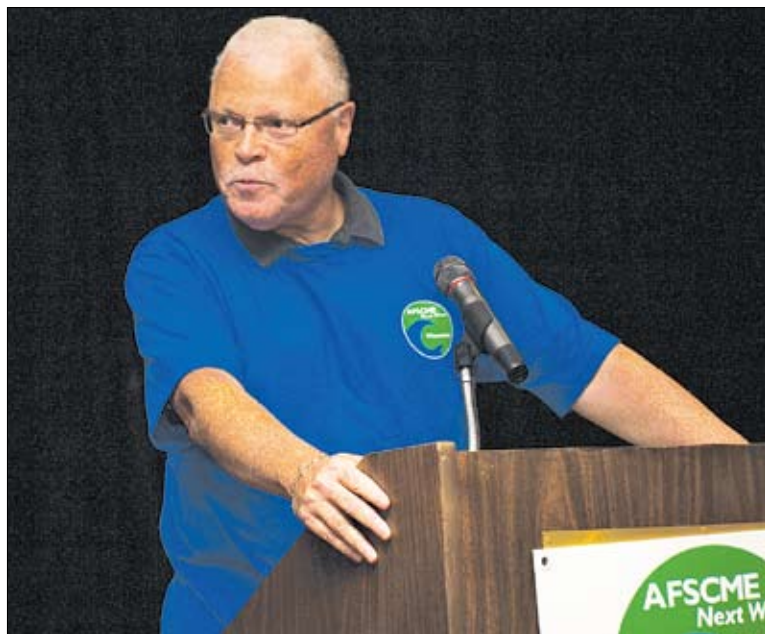
The guard changed at the top of International AFSCME when the nation's biggest and most politically active union held its June election in Los Angeles, elevating Lee Saunders to the presidency and succeeding him as secretary-treasurer with his running mate, Laura Reyes.

Saunders, a Cleveland native who has visited Wisconsin several times during the recall election, won 54% of the vote, from delegates representing 683,628 members, to 46% for New Yorker Danny Donohue, from delegates representing 582,358 members. Vote totals were announced late on June 21.

As the 4th chief of the 1.6 million-member union, Saunders will be its first African American president. Reyes will be the union's first female secretary-treasurer. He succeeds Gerald McEntee, who retired after 31 years as president and backed Saunders to replace him. The contest included some feisty debates between Saunders and Donohue as the best way forward for the union, dominated by public workers.

The GOP in 2010 swept in a phalanx of anti-worker legislation and governors including Scott Walker in Wisconsin and John Kasich in Ohio.

"We know Wall Street and their allies are engaged in an all-out assault against our members and the services we provide," Saunders said. "We are energized and ready for the battles



Lee Saunders speaking at a Milwaukee AFSCME gathering

ahead."

AFSCME's importance in politics - and to the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, where its locals are the biggest membership component - was also recently celebrated by the Wisconsin Labor History Society, with a historical reminder and Internet link to afscme.org/union/history.

"It was 80 years ago -- in 1932 as the Depression was getting into full swing -- that the seeds of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFL-CIO) were first planted in Madison WI.

"Fearing the state's premier civil service system was in jeopardy, a small group of white collar state of Wisconsin workers formed the Wisconsin State Association of Administrative,

Clerical, Fiscal and Technical Employees. On May 16, 1932 the American Federation of Labor issued the group a charter of Federal Labor Union, No. 18213. Among the 50 or so members was the state's senior personnel examiner, Arnold Zander, who after the union became chartered under its current name in 1936 became its first national president, a position he held until 1964."

Pointing to Gov. Walker's recent action against civil service standards and public workers, one historian commented, "Look how far has American fallen in 80 years."

Political meetings heat up



With several races ending Aug. 14 and more confrontations unfolding in November, incumbents, candidates and the politically engaged have been rally-

ing, raising funds and weighing the realities of GOP legislative redistricting. Quite a mixture of leading Democrats gathered recently in Whitefish Bay including (from left above) District 18 candidate LaShawndra Vernon, Rep. Josh Zepnick (see stories on Pages 7 and 10) along with Assembly minority leader Peter Barca and a candidate waiting to see who on the GOP side he will face Nov. 6, John Pokrandt, in refigured District 13. At left is Rep. Cory Mason, redistricted out of his family home in Racine but running unopposed in a nearby district.



Unions fund State Fair booth

Despite the financial crunch imposed by the Walker administration's emasculating of collective bargaining rights, the labor community will still put its community-serving foot forward as it has for decades at the Wisconsin State Fair, using volunteers and donations to run the Union Label Booth Aug. 2-12.

The continuing promotion and meet and greet with union workers and retirees will be funded by tax deductible donations to the 501(c)3 LaborCommunity@Work and by volunteer freebies provided to fair visitors that are union-made items from pencils to magnets - plus the community's first opportunity to win the behemoth Harley-Davidson motorcycle raffled off at Laborfest September 3.

The union label booth program - along with the need for items and assistance - was announced by the Union Label Committee chair and also president of the sponsoring Milwaukee Area Labor Council, Willie D. Ellis, business representative and organizer for Operating Engineers Local 139.

The thousands who drop by the booth during the fair don't realize how much volunteer time and money have been spent being part of the exhibition hall activity. Three daily shifts of volunteers run the booth from morning to evening all 10 days of the fair. The unions raise \$5,500 to cover the costs of the operations (including rental, insurance, entry tickets for the volunteers plus some purchased giveaways to passersby along with items donated by individual unions).

It's another example of how union principles, made in the USA products and community sharing are exemplified year-round.

Harley dealerships provide a display model bike for visitors to admire while volunteers sell raffle tickets for \$8 (two for \$15), a considerable payoff since the 2013 TRIKE Harley-Davidson motorcycle (yes, the new big one) normally retails around \$31,000.

Donations to the labor council can now be made online with major credits cards at milwaukeeelabor.org and also by check to LaborCommunity@Work (earmarked booth) at 633. S. Hawley Rd., Suite 110, Milwaukee WI 532114.

For more information or to volunteer for shifts at the fair, contact Robin at (414) 771-7070.



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Vouchers

From Page 1

on sizable taxpayer money -- and a complicated aid formula bleeding money from public schools even as the state reduces support alarmingly for public education.

This is the curious schizophrenia in current media coverage, which some observers interpret as giving the program where real scandals occur a pass or softening the problem.

With voucher schools like Daniels ran, the full weight of the criminal record, the beating charges, the 20 times police had been called to the school, were buried way down, not fully known and only given prominence in TV coverage.

Such lack of print enterprise or editorial outrage is particularly strange since the voucher program would be easy to cover. There are a little more than 100 schools in the city of Milwaukee created under the voucher gift of taxpayer funding, yet the reports of corruption, child neglect and endangerment range over 30% of them over the last few years. Imagine how even a tinier percentage would be treated in the public school arena.

Contrast the treatment of the voucher program with how JS gets highly exercised at poor families abusing government food share projects by grabbing extra groceries or at the Milwaukee police department when reporters uncover mislabeled crime statistics.

JS has long had a beef with the Milwaukee police department (just as many educators think it has a beef with the MPS). So it clearly encour-

aged conspiratorial nuts to accuse police officers of deliberately reducing aggravated assaults into simple assaults to make crime figures look better, much to the anger of both the police union and Police Chief Ed Flynn who have to face each other across the bargaining table while cooperating on law and order issues.

In reality there is no benchmark to compare this data against past police departments, as JS itself concedes. As one angry sergeant complained to me in private, by heritage city police would be more inclined to "land harder in reporting an assault rather than lighter." He was particularly outraged when the newspaper speculated out loud that Milwaukee major crime wasn't going down but going up and officers were colluding with Flynn to fudge for political purposes.

Turns out that further investigation and studies all the way up to the Common Council blew all that up in the newspaper's face. Crime was going down, some of the data entries went the other way, reporting simple assaults as aggravated, and the main cause was computer coding and clerical problems. Could it be that so much of what the pubic gobbles up as conspiracy actually comes down to human frailty, technological limits and policy complexity? That's certainly what consumers dealing with phone and cable companies and shopping centers face daily going about their normal lives.

Coverage of education issues raises similar speculation. While no one thinks 66% graduation rates are acceptable for public schools, you will look in vain for stories

of how even that is remarkable given the economic and social wreckage MPS deals with daily and how its results improve despite constant disparagement and loss of funding. Yet meanwhile more state money is set aside for the voucher program though studies prove it's not as good for students.

Truth is, no one can attack voucher schools without being accused of not caring about poor black children or not appreciating the power of faith education, since religious fundamentalism and church locales have proven a major part of the voucher growth. Those attitudes have become the tools to protect voucher schools and avoid side-by-side comparisons, even when available data demonstrates their weakness, even while the facts suggest that the occasional voucher successes are actually an aberration.

Maybe that's why the media seems generally less upset by abuses in the voucher schools, which it treats as growing pains in a movement it has editorially endorsed.

Of course there are capable voucher schools, though not at the rate or results of public schools, proving that skill and knowledge make a difference in any system. But studies continue to demonstrate how the wonderful sounding abstract theory -- that voucher schools provide options for disadvantaged families - doesn't work in real life and parents regularly flee back to the public schools to give their children truly rounded education.

The voucher approach is credited as offering disadvantaged families a "choice" - choice being a winning concept in selling education though apparently not so popular these days in terms of women's reproductive rights.

This blind belief in voucher money has defeated the usual media standard of looking at results, weighing outcomes in context and more fairly reporting how public schools have responded to all the challenges with a heck of a lot more students and responsibility to not cherry-pick.

Maybe it's defensible that the journalistic watchdog reserves its hardest scrutiny for the largest institutions, but it sure has let smaller fish that have philosophical support wriggle away -- until they become quite big fish indeed.

Voucher schools are the well-meaning concept that in practice opens the door to corrupt influences and secretive outside right-wing money. The forces funding voucher growth completely contradict the intentions of the communities getting these schools. They further a political agenda that would upset the inner city neighborhoods these schools serve - and many educations suspect the newspaper is serving as the hand-maiden.

But newspapers are not alone. Politicians, including entrenched city incumbents, proclaim a "black pride" brand to support this program - yet they are taking money from the wealthy voucher supporters. Their constituents have to look harder at where their campaign money comes from and how they play footsie with the opposition in the background.

Ask yourself: Is this where your candidate is getting money? There's a national money conduit called American Federation for Children, relying on rich donors in Arkansas, New York, Texas and California who care little about Milwaukee children and whose campaign expenditures only emerge in tardy reports.

AFC has been playing heavily and somewhat nastily in local politics for years - often running repulsive political flyers and TV ads against progressive names such as state Sen. Chris Larson and Rep. JoCasta Zamarippa.

It may sound convincing to claim that deeply faithful neighbors can do a better job teaching children than trained and often unionized professionals, that well meaning people can teach as well as college educated ones, that grade school children can learn with occasional prayer sessions, that union teachers are not as dedicated as the nice lady sitting next to you in the church pew. And politicians like Scott Walker can make hay on the idea that experience is not a factor in merit, that the teacher who sticks and learns over 20 years is not as valuable as the teacher who excels, blazes (and maybe burns out) in the first two years.

So now in Wisconsin politics the voucher program has become an unrestrained side-show without sufficient regulation. It keeps growing in state funding and territory, relying on gullible minority leaders. It has attracted influences aimed at swallowing up local voice and public schools, allowing an influx of fraud and charlatans taking advantage of people's love of children.

Wealthy conservatives saw the local passion from afar and exploited it for a different social agenda, figuring those liberals were too dumb to catch on.

The sunshine of publicity could expose this double-edged game, but sunshine requires a media with objectivity, that won't let political leanings interfere. Educators now wonder at the tendency to downplay voucher school abuses while exaggerating deficits in the public schools.

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Harris proving seat hardly a Coggs hand-me-down

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
Labor Press Editor

New city treasurer Spencer Coggs is a die-hard Democrat and that is the label on all five candidates eager to replace him in the state Senate District 6, so his departure now won't take away the Democratic majority.

But clearly, party label is not the main factor in this Aug. 14 finale - it's more family name vs. progressive representation.

The Coggs political dynasty is an evocative concept from the days when Isaac and particularly Marcia Coggs broke important ground in the Madison legislature. Their high community reputation allowed daughter Elizabeth a long-term stint on the Milwaukee County Board, while cousin Spencer advanced in the legislature and gained more fame as one of the 14 who fled to Illinois.

At the Courthouse, Elizabeth Coggs - formerly running as Coggs-Jones -- drew attention not just on committee assignments but on whether her absences outnumbered her presence.



Harris mingled with backers at a June fund-raiser.

Senate District 6

Still, her long-tenure in public leadership along with the Coggs heritage simplified her sail into the legislature to replace retiring Rep. Polly Williams in District 10 two years ago. Now she wants to inherit Spencer's senate seat.

There are other Coggs public servants, most notable the strong community career of Milele Coggs on the Milwaukee Common Council. There is a Coggs relative, Rep. Leon Young, so ensconced inside this senate region (the Assembly District 16) that he has no opponent this year though he doesn't have a get-up-and-go reputation in Madison.

Perhaps the family connection will carry resonance in Young's Assembly area, but interestingly there are intense, active and progressive contests going on in the other two Assembly districts, 17 and 18, where Elizabeth Coggs is not favored by many of the unions and community groups engaged.

Their favorite is actually a more recent (now two-term) county supervisor, Nikiya Harris. The most familiar face is yet another county supervisor, long-timer Michael Mayo.

Another recent election demonstrated that the Coggs name is not a secure path to election, a reminder of what many local politicians say about presence at the doors and solid knowledge and authority being most important.

An Elizabeth Coggs daughter, Priscilla, was beaten for a County Board seat earlier this year by another known last name with a more energetic and persuasive campaign platform, Russell Stamper II.

"It demonstrated that the Coggs brand is not invincible when presence and gumption come along," noted a candidate in a neighboring district who faces a similar problem.

Senate district residents Labor Press spoke to said things like: "It was Nikiya on the hottest days at the doors, showing her familiarity with the neighborhoods" . . . "She was just presenting herself and not criticizing others" . . . "I was quite impressed by her manner."

Indeed, from the time she announced her candidacy at the Talgo grounds -- the site of the "lost jobs" train wreck caused by the Walker administration, a pointed location to signal why fearless black voices are needed in Madison - Harris has been identified as the candidate to watch. She has moved from sleeper in the media coverage to the one making the most impact on the streets.

These are familiar neighborhoods and problems for Harris, the big sister who helped bring up a family. She has a bachelor's degree in community education and a master's in adult education from UWM. She is considered a political newcomer compared to some opponents, but instinctively she understands the power of the doors, the value of meeting and listening and she among all of them has been out there for years holding community forums and education sessions on vital concerns such as the voter ID law and mental health services.

Spencer Coggs was a popular senator, but the question remains whether his coattails and political savvy are big enough for another Coggs to hang onto, particularly one with a spottier



Detailing what the decision to block jobs in the 30th Street Corridor was costing her community, Nikiya Harris made a strong pitch for stronger leadership in Madison, where one of her opponents has served in the Assembly. Harris announced her senate candidacy at the site where the Spanish firm Talgo was being forced to reduce three dozen more jobs because of Walker administration policy.

reputation.

Harris is hardly an unknown quantity though the state Senate is a significant step up. She has the support of several unions who early announced (SEIU, AFT and the nurses) plus colleagues on the County Board who call her a tireless and detail-oriented member - detail and persistence being vital in the legislative process.

There are some interesting others seeking this seat - a community organizer for veterans, Delta L. Triplett; and another candidate with a noted last name, Allyn Monroe Swan (whose father, Monroe Swan, was a pioneer black figure in the senate and whose cousin is Polly Williams).

Mayo is more likely to pull votes away from former supervisor Elizabeth Coggs than from current colleague Harris.

Despite this veteran supervisor's legal issues he had enjoyed union support -- until he was quietly snubbed in the last round

of elections, largely because while his views and votes were worker friendly, he was perceived as testing the political air too much, serving as too willing right-hand factotum for Lee Holloway. But that power departed with the board chairman's retirement, leaving Mayo somewhat more isolated on the board.

So Mayo's entry into the senate race is being perceived by insiders as an effort to regain the luster lost to a newly active board (where Harris is part of the team approach).

Wisconsin Progress, the leading wing of the progressive movement, is strongly backing Harris' effort. But the capper endorsement came when Rep. Tamara Grigsby went on radio to announce her support. Though unable to run again for health concerns, the much admired Grigsby represents District 17, within the Senate 6, so that turns into a key component for recognition and turnout Aug. 14.

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Election

From Page 1

An August primary could shut off their voice before they even cast a ballot. The techniques of partisan districting combined with the excuse of fulfilling federal military absentee ballot obligations have imposed a new calendar game. That moved the supposed "fall primary" to Tuesday, August 14, nearly three months ahead of the November 6 general election.

The main statewide primary is on the GOP side, where four candidates out-extreme each other in a blatant misread of Tea Party fervor to face lone Democrat Tammy Baldwin for the US Senate seat being vacated by Herb Kohl. But while this contest will draw media heat, it barely affects the majority of voting citizens.

I mean, who cares if it is really the old goat, the much defeated goat, the Walker sycophant or the D.C. hedge fund hog facing off against Baldwin?

The redistricting extremities forced a federal court panel to step in and redraw near South Side Assembly District 8 where the GOP tried to pretend the growing Latino citizenry didn't have a majority. See story on Page 7.

But while there are still unfolding federal challenges to the statewide maps, the GOP radical tweaking couldn't convert most of Milwaukee from a strong Democratic makeup. Pausing to punish some of their toughest opponents, the Republicans mainly made several districts even more Democratic to further protect nearby Republicans through reducing internal diversity.

By deliberately making secure Democratic districts more Democratic, by strengthening the existing partisan pattern rather than expanding diversity, the GOP could still run afoul of federal laws, but it sure encouraged more hopefuls with no public service track record to stick a D after their name on the ballot and clog up the election process.

The GOP sought to more deeply protect Alberta Darling from future inroads (note this Republican is unopposed in Senate District 8) by eliminating Sandy Pasch's northeast Milwaukee and North Shore Assembly base. It moved her entire District 22 way over into Waukesha County and other distant Republican domains. So it not only carved out the Whitefish Bay home where Pasch had raised a family while establishing a nursing career, it was clearly intended to force her to quit politics. That has failed miserably, since redistricting put many of her voters in a nearby district where they clamored for her to run. See story on Page 9.

In Racine they also did it to outspoken Cory Mason (now



Wisconsin Progress leader Scott Spector is pushing progressives to step up in the Aug. 14 races.

running unopposed in a neighboring district). In Milwaukee they did it to Josh Zepnick and Fred Kessler, who both intend by November to be back in their original districts and to win again. Details Page 7.

Traditional political complacency among Democrats is now being criticized by church groups, seniors, community activists and unions. Progressives, moderates and segments of organized labor are telling the central Democratic Party machine to stop playing the fool, change its ways and start looking beyond the money issue and the traditional primary fence-sitting. Step in when it matters - that's the new message. Get primary active now when good Democrats are running against DINO (Democrats In Name Only), to borrow an acronym device and scorn from the GOP invective against RINO, those demeaned as Republicans In Name Only who used to be the effective centrists that citizens could actually talk to).

The Democrats are traditionally the "big tent party," open to all shades of blue from dogs to peaceniks. So the party had a habit of sitting out primary contests among Democrats rather than step into the hue's hue game.

It still makes sense to do so around the state, noted Mark Miller, the party's leader in the state Senate. Speaking powerfully for Democratic and underestimated newcomer Tanya Lohr, who will take on the GOP's Glenn Grothman in November, he explained to me that his duty was to defend Democratic incumbents and not weigh in prematurely on which of two Democrats he supports to take on the Republican in the crucial Senate District 12 (Tomahawk area), where veteran Jim Holperin is retiring.

That race along with heavily funded attacks on the Oshkosh area's Jessica King, who defeated GOP Randy Hopper in a recent District 18 recall, are the keys to GOP efforts to regain control of the state Senate now that John Lehman (District 21) has been declared the Racine winner.

But where will party leaders be in those primary races where a winner truly determines future responsibility in Milwaukee? Again and again at community

events, political fund-raisers and union strategy sessions, one big argument is a reminder of the consequences of cowardice.

The case most mentioned is Chris Larson, then a mere county supervisor who decided to buck an established longtime Democratic incumbent in District 7 though 2010 was a horrible year for Democrats. He had behind-the-scenes support from some Democratic stalwarts such as Fred Kessler, but he also had fists shaken at him and fingers wagged in public by other Democratic Party leaders for standing up to "one of ours," though by his votes and policies Jeff Plale was regularly siding with the Republicans and the voters had come to know it.

Had Larson not stood up to the pressure and won resoundingly, many speakers point out, the famous Illinois flight of the Wisconsin 14 -- to give the public time to understand what Scott Walker was up to in attacking school funding and collective bargaining - well, it would never have happened.

It required all the Democrats to block the fiscal quorum and Plale, who has now been hired by the Walker administration, would never have left. Such is the reward of boldness. Such is the price of wishy-washiness.

"We will no longer support someone because they are occasionally a right vote for our issues," thundered Wisconsin Progress executive director Scott Spector at a June 27 fundraiser at The Hamilton.

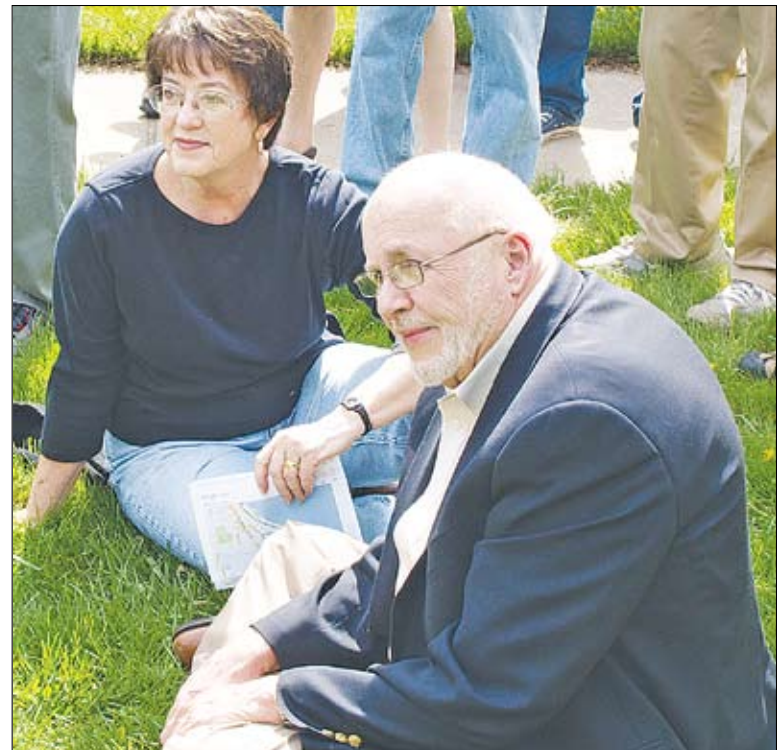
"We don't care if there is a D or an R and I after you name - what kind of a leader are you? What kind of heart do you have for our issues of schools, families, and children?"

Joining him in speeches at the event attended by a dozen August candidates were Larson, Representatives JoCasta Zamarippa and Sandy Pasch. The group used to be known as Progressive Majority, but now it is admittedly more focused on becoming a majority rather than saying it already is in terms of holding office.

But they are not staying out of primaries and are forcefully confronting the established Democratic Party machinery to step up - behind the scenes if not in public - and their demands are having an effect.

"Normally, we Democrats stay away from primaries," noted Zamarippa in her June 27 remarks, looking pointedly as many speakers did at one guest at the event, state Democratic Party leader Michael Tate. "We can't anymore."

Tate didn't flinch, but he did not publicly respond either. But leaders of the state AFL-CIO and other groups nodded in agreement with the remarks and, as their endorsements indicate, are indeed getting into the primary races and in some cases openly opposing established Democratic



TALK ABOUT VINDICTIVE! - The GOP carefully uprooted longtime family homes in redistricting to make life difficult for opponents. Among the forced departures are Rep. Fred Kessler (shown at a Bay View event recently with wife Joan, an appeals court judge) and the Pasches (below), Allan and Sandy, though like Kessler she will move and run again, though she has to win in another district.



incumbents who previously had known knee-jerk backing.

The GOP legislature -- and its legal team paid a half million by taxpayers -- also tried to turn swing districts more Republican, but since both camps have moderates, they actually may have opened the doors in November to popular "of the people" candidates who may or may not be GOP.

A remarkable side-effect of 2010 around the state is how many regular citizens who never were consumed by politics before are stepping out in their own communities to run for legislature as forward-looking Democrats or independents, including school teacher, nurses, fire fighters, business owners and others angry at the direction of the current state majority.

Lohr is one example, building a profound regional dislike for Grothman into a larger look at how his attitudes and policies were injuring communities.

Though many of these contests won't gain full weight until closer to November, look for activity in districts once deemed "GOP safe." Don't be surprised if these actually turn into hot races, particularly in the Milwaukee-Waukesha-Racine drifts.

Some incumbents are relying on a "make no waves" voting

record while some grassroots opponents are talking seriously at the doors that it is past time to start making waves. "Once we sat in the back of the bus without fighting -- but no more," said one candidate who curiously has a middle of the road reputation.

Something else remarkable is occurring that could play out mightily in many local races, where incumbent or well-know Democrats are relying on their voting record, well-known family name or polished manner to survive, but are being challenged about who is secretly behind their campaigning (local citizens or out of state rich?), the moral commitment behind their votes, their coziness with conservative money, their slavery to the voucher school networks and even their tendency to play racial politics - all now issues of active discussion in the community and radiating out to voters.

"The fat lady now sings in August," said one wag at a union strategy session, noting dozens of unions that moved up their endorsement and interview process to late July.

Several are opposing incumbents who once had union support. The big concern of all these groups is whether they can make enough noise for voters to hear by Aug. 14.

Another Riemer in politics

By Dominique Paul Noth

Labor Press Editor

at Milwaukee's Rufus

King High School, at

Illinois college, it was others who talked of Daniel Riemer's people skills and saw a political future. Like most young people he had other concerns. But certainly he had the family grooming - father David worked for Gov. Doyle, ran for County Executive and today is a widely consulted policy expert as director of Community Advocates

But as his father proudly points out, "Daniel is also his



Rep. JoCasta Zamarippa has been actively campaigning in her race and for colleagues.

Assembly 8

As the first Latina in the Madison legislature, JoCasta Zamarippa ran into the buzzsaw of GOP obstinacy to any forward progress in 2011 and acquitted herself with remarkable grace, offering intelligent amendments and arguments. Then she joined the successful fight that kept the GOP redistricting from taking away the Latino majority in her district, thanks to a federal court decision.

Optimism in the face of opposition is the theme of her reelection campaign. She constantly reminds voters not to be downhearted by losses but think of the notable blocking moves along with clear wins. "Don't let them tell you the GOP succeeded at redistricting," she says. "They didn't. Federal judges threw out the maps in our district. The most repressive voter ID bill in the country has been blocked by a federal court. The effort to duplicate Arizona's immigration law in Wisconsin didn't go anywhere. So don't be disheartened. The fight will turn the tide."

As a result of her determination under fire, she is regarded as a shoo-in to win a second term, particularly since this is a replay of the first time. Laura Manriquez's opposition platform is largely a pale echo and what many call a stubborn personal fight against Zamarippa's ascendance.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

Assembly 7

mother's son and that's a big part of the influence" and Ellie has been active in the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association (MTEA).

Today Daniel is carving his own individual views and ambitions in his first foray into politics while his family friends show support by fundraising. In District 7 he is the unexpected young energy stumping for office, recognized for both independent views and progressive ideals on public service and strongly criticizing the divisive atmosphere in Madison and the "demoralizing" attacks on public education.

As he has tirelessly been doing the doors he had an unin-

Assembly 9

Right next door to District 8, with another growing Latino population, is a district not taken in by the ethnic name of Jose Guzman, because they know his real political heritage -- a conservative who tried to bump off the popular Pedro Colon in past elections.

The voters seem to be sticking with the current incumbent, Josh Zepnick, a strong Voces de la Frontera supporter and reliable liberal voice in the legislature. Even districting him out of the area hasn't deterred Zepnick from moving right back in and maintaining his availability.

-- D.P.N.



How do you embrace family heritage but make clear you have individual views? Daniel Riemer is dealing with that problem as he talks to voters - and got some practical advice from one recent listener at right, Sen. Chris Larson.

tended gift from the GOP - many residents are surprised to know what district they are now in and that there's a contest.

The GOP redistricted mainly to add conservative streets in nearby competitive districts. So Riemer now has a region expanded from Greenfield and West Milwaukee to more of West Allis and Milwaukee - which means many know little about the longtime District 7 incumbent he must beat Aug. 14, Peggy Krusick.

"Most of the doors I'm the first person telling them about the new makeup" of the district, he told Labor Press.

At a recent political rally, he was gently teased by another active, young but more established politico, State Sen. Chris Larson, who told him to "start



wearing running shoes - you're going to need them at the doors."

Riemer laughed recalling that moment but also credited Larson with some wise advice.

"People assume I share my father's positions, so I ask them to ask me instead since we disagree on some things such as education," he said. "But Chris reminded me that people don't ask, they just see the last name and assume, and I will have to learn to live with that."

He saw the street experience as the essence of local campaigning and a chance "to personalize issues." He's learned to deal with interest, acceptance and occasionally hostility from longtime Krusickians.

"You just have to know how to persist, to keep going whatever happens and enjoy it," he said. "I've been bitten by dogs twice and hoping for a third."

Some of Krusick's colleagues in the legislature are openly breaking ranks or quietly backing Riemer, disturbed by what they call her "unpredictability." Off the record, they admit to being

apprehensive about her erratic votes and curious arguments, even for the occasional votes they agree with.

Her fading reputation among Madison colleagues explains why labor federations went from supporting her 10 years ago to opposing her in 2010 and again this year. "She was always a consistent vote against the current school voucher funding system," one legislator told me, "so even when the explanations seemed unhinged, we were glad for the support."

Things have changed. Riemer now has the support of the Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals, AFT, SEIU - all known for political acumen and activity - and in a major change, the MTEA is preparing to work hard for him as we went to press. Add to that the recent PEOPLE endorsement of the large AFSCME District Council 48.

Whoever wins the Democratic primary Aug. 14 is in effect the new representative for the newly configured district for the next two years.

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Underdog gains support tackling Dem incumbent

By Dominique Paul Noth

Labor Press Editor

A central point of Mandela Barnes' challenge is he is not running against Jason Fields but out of a deep sense of disappointment with the "almost visible sense of hate" and gridlock in legislative progress.

He thinks a true leader in the Assembly would galvanize community attention at a time when poverty in his city is No. 4 in the nation, black male jobless in his district is over 50% and money-saving issues he has promoted in criminal justice reform have failed to budge and even gone backwards in Madison.

To many observers, Fields - the name Democrat who failed to sign a Walker recall petition -- has been a big part of the

Assembly 11

problem and not any solution at a time when the voices on the street, including Barnes, are crying out for solution.

This race has caused a profound underground split in the Democratic Party between operatives who look at numbers and results and members who try to read internal fortitude.

"Except for the voucher issue," one party leader told me, "Jason is a reliable vote." Hence Democrats known as old-timer consensus builders such as Mayor Tom Barrett and Common Council President Willie Hines are supporting Fields.

Wisconsin Progress, many unions and energetic young



Mandela Barnes has been meeting with community groups, political officials and District 11 residents to bolster his efforts to unseat an incumbent.

Democrats say it is time to look at the guts and are strongly backing Barnes. Granted it is much harder to explain the success of a "community organizer" (until he becomes president of the United States) and it is easy to excuse a legislator on a general voting pattern without looking at his true impact in his community.

Fields was a co-sponsor of the recent rather virulent bill to expand the voucher program to higher income households. Colleagues point to a suspect track record and a funding stream connected with disgraced Republican figure Scott Jensen. Fields' support of voucher schools and acceptance of voucher network money now extends to backing similar efforts in Chris Christie's New Jersey - and all this strikes many educators as moving well past a principled belief in choice schools to an "unprincipled support of the money stream," as one angry school official told me.

The Steelworkers painfully remember how Fields ruined a campaign for safer conditions for black women exposed to clouds of unknown drugs they were unboxing at Capitol Returns. In the midst of the organizing campaign, Fields came in to the plant to tell the workers he thought the operators were "good people."

"The workers believed him and that broke the back of the

unionizing," one organizer remembers.

Barnes in contrast has been long active and well known in the community and not as concerned about a voting record but about the causes he supports. So he still gets characterized as the "upstart," the 'young Turk,' the "right guy but too early to run."

He is clearly an underdog even among some supporters. They openly worry that the community "is not there yet," that an unusual August primary against an entrenched and well-funded incumbent may not be the perfect time to get the message and the voters out.

Barnes offers the other side of the argument: "If not now, when?" History demonstrates how victory often follows defeat for the progressive movement.

Barnes is actually articulate and dedicated, college trained, hired to organize activities for the church group MICAH. He serves in the coalition for the Milwaukee Jobs Act, speaks out at City Hall where he briefly worked and appears as a TV panelist on issues of criminal justice, talking eloquent side by side with a chief judge, the leader of the Benedict Center and Milwaukee DA John Chisholm.

Those discussions detail how costly Wisconsin's incarceration process is, beyond how bloatedly damaging for the

black community. All hands agree that better solutions are out there to return rehabilitated felons to productive jobs and how cooperation in Madison could do something about that quickly, actually reducing costs and creating greater efficiency and equity (traditionally a winning argument with conservatives). Right now, stagnation on proven policy is costing taxpayers twice as much as the procedures in neighboring states.

The legislature "can do something about that," Barnes said. "So why aren't we?" It is a winning argument at the doors.

Which brings us around to the disappointment over Fields, who has become a familiar presence in the legislature, with a recognized family name in the inner city. Being a legislator can be an important gig to create change, but it can also be a cushy job allowing a lot of social backpats and convention going - and the people the incumbent hangs with can create a sense of distance with the street.

If there is time for Mandela Barnes to get the voters behind him, he surely has the progressive movement and many unions in his corner. He has been endorsed by the state council of SEIU, the nurses, the UAW, IBEW, AFT, UFCW, AFSCME PEOPLE and other groups.

Trapshooting

After 13 weeks of shooting in the Milwaukee Area Labor Council league, here are the results by team reflecting wins, losses, and ties:

Class AA W-L-T

1. 6 volts to lightning IBEW 494 9-4-0
2. Wirenuts IBEW 494 8-5-0
3. Pipe Dopes Plumbers Local 75 6-7-0
4. Pipers Plumbers Local 75 3-10-0

Class A

1. Blind Men CWA 4603 9-3-1
2. High Voltage IBEW 494 9-4-0

3. R717 Plumbers Local 75 7-6-0
4. Lucky 13 CWA 4603 0-12-1

Class B

1. No Shorts IBEW 494 10-3-0
2. Blind 7-6-0
3. Steam Shooters Plumbers Local 75 5-8-0
4. Cloud Busters Plumbers Local 75 4-9-0

LEAGUE HIGH GUNS

- | | |
|--------------|-----|
| Ron Wahl | 298 |
| Scott Kruck | 294 |
| Jeff Jeske | 292 |
| Pete Malecki | 291 |

Reported by Ron Wahl



The televised Fourth Street Forum invited Barnes (far right) to explain the need for criminal justice reform. Also joining moderator Enrique Figueroa (left) were Milwaukee District Attorney John Chisholm and Benedict Center director Jeanne Geraci.

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Outdated thinking impeding Pasch's desire to serve

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
Labor Press Editor

This is a tale of two districts, one departed but historically famous as an inner city African American district. No more. Both the community and the district are much reshaped.

The GOP majority went even further. It chopped away the north end and expanded east to the lakefront. And that plus normal cultural change gutted what for generations had been thought of as Annette (Polly) Williams' district.

She is the now retired feisty, sometimes ornery African American leader whose best intentions for social justice and children pioneered the voucher school program - but she backed away when she saw how the operative mechanism imposed by the GOP was serving as a glorified vehicle for right-wing politics and abandoning the real minority poor to incorporate middle class incomes - in effect using taxpayer money as backdoor tuition for regular private schools.

Other black politicians have been slow to realize that the principled concern about helping poor children has been co-opted by big money right-wing efforts to use that voucher opening to introduce policy ideas that most residents of this district would loathe if they came from other mouths.

When Williams retired, Elizabeth Cogs abandoned her County Board seat to take over in 2010 and now is trying to switch upward again, seeing her relative Spencer Cogs leaving the state Senate. (Senate District 6 seat may not have been intended as a family inheritance or a royal token, so many intend to make a fight over its future - see Page 5.)

So there is now a new real District 10 tale despite an historical connection some cling to. The new district incorporates Shorewood. A crucial north section has been handed to the most obedient Democrat the GOP knew in Milwaukee, District 11's Jason Fields. The core of its voting power reflects the new vitality of Riverwest and North Shore Grassroots.

Assembly 10

Enter the fever for a candidate who can speak to diverse needs while being known as a hard-working champion of minority progress. That is Sandy Pasch, whose legislative insight and stances have won support over the years from community leaders including US Rep. Gwen Moore, a constant supporter.

In the legislature Rep. Pasch of District 22 (now cut into pieces and literally transported way out west) was the outspoken defender of mental health care, fair school funding, minority advances and other causes where she articulately thwarted right-wing prattler Sen. Alberta Darling and others -- and actually made strong inroads in GOP terrain during last year's recall election against Darling, though she couldn't defeat a surprising last minute surge from Menomonee Falls and Mequon.

The GOP all along schemed to remove her voter base from future threats against their Darling -- and they expected Pasch to simply cry uncle and go away. "Courage deserves reward," noted many citizens, who realize such persistence is not typical of so-called "establishment candidates." She was the most obvious if not the only target in redrawing districts to force out strong incumbents or to force them to move to new homes if they wanted to continue representing citizens.

And move Pasch will. In an all-Democrats field, Pasch now needs to win Aug. 14 in a district many do not yet realize has been radically reconfigured. Now District 10 includes more voters who know and support Pasch.

African Americans may be majority in the district, but many of their most active community leaders expressed anger to Labor Press at "people who play racial politics" by sticking stubbornly to the past shape and desires of the old District 10.

Some surprising game-players are caught in the old views - Williams herself, Sen. Lena Taylor and others who apparently worry about an erosion of black power in the legislature. Several



Reassured by her legions of supporters not to worry about the political sideshows in District 10, Rep. Sandy Pasch just keeps talking about her issues, appearing with co-Assembly health leader Jon Richards to praise the US Supreme Court upholding of the Affordable Care Act before TV cameras at the federal courthouse or meeting with her US House representative and friend at Gwen Moore's offices for a press conference (right).

black constituents, however, thought that was short-sighted and too nativist. They expressed how unhappy they are to see such simplicities put in play "especially against someone who has risked her future and career for her beliefs as Pasch has done," one told me.

Emphasizing how wrong-minded that view is among black leaders, two outspoken champions of black causes, MALC chief operating officer Sheila Cochran and Rep. Tamara Grigsby, have thrown their influence behind Pasch. She has also been endorsed by AFSCME and other unions.

Taylor has dismayed colleagues by arguing against Pasch in conversations, twitters and Facebook (the most aggressive comments she seemingly deleted), putting support behind Mildred Coby, a well-regarded church outreach leader with scant political chops.

"Everyone says Millie is a nice person - if that's a qualification," chuckled one active African American political insider. But Coby got ready for this



campaign by taking the candidate training at Emerge Wisconsin where, ironically, an influential board adviser for training women to run as strong Democrats is Pasch.

Taylor's behavior has raised speculation that she regards Pasch as an articulate threat to the leadership role Taylor constantly seeks and Pasch already has in the Milwaukee caucus.

Other political figures who support voucher schools and have taken money from the American Federation for Children followed Taylor's lead.

In a previous political appearance, Coby came in a distant third in a county board race. Backers openly concede she lacks the proven experience and intellectual dexterity of Pasch,

who would normally be a shoo-in in this four-way contest. Except some people have a bad memory and an outdated sense of demographics, boundaries and responsibility to modern pioneers.

"It's understandable and overdue that districts dominated by an ethnic group would want someone in office who comes from their own culture and reflects it," one candidate told me, referring not just to personal black heritage but Latino heritage, noting how the growing Latino power spoke up recently in choosing Jose Perez as its alderman.

But "Latinos are smart enough to go Anglo or black if that's the best official," the candidate added.

"The ethnic preference is understandable," said another black candidate, "but you also have to look hard at who is best for the community and how more than redistricting should force us to always consider the best leaders."

More bluntly, another black politician told me, "We have to grow up. We've been fooled by the color of the skin not the content of the character in several local elections. We've chosen someone because of color and been badly disappointed. We keep doing this to ourselves. Now we have to learn to look at the track record and the heart."

Concerns to keep minority presence high in Madison could be right if it weren't Pasch, these politicians are saying.

Many African American leaders interviewed for Labor Press concede they don't want to openly offend black leaders who regularly speak up for social justice but don't like the whisper campaign and are rejecting the come-ons of the Taylor camp.

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A fortunate moment for Kelley Albrecht and a typical moment for a veteran Democratic insider. Albrecht, the first-time candidate taking on ALEC henchman Robin Vos in Burlington, has lots of support but no experience with the campaign ropes. At a Milwaukee Jobs fund raiser July 12, she met Rep. Fred Kessler, who assuredly does know those ropes and is always willing to advise new candidates on how to raise money and influence voters. That may be why the GOP redistricted the Kesslers out of their home.

Kessler gets under GOP skin by helping fellow Democrats

By Dominique Paul Noth
Labor Press Editor

Fred Kessler, a former judge and still a nationally known mediator on such legal matters as districting and labor relations, is married to state appeals judge Joan Kessler. They lovingly put together a nice home in District 12, where he has been serving for years as an active incumbent - and also as a rainmaker and recruiter for progressive Democrats, helping lead both the funding and strategy charge.

Could that be why the GOP redistricting carefully carved out

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Assembly 12

his home block, dumping the house where he and Joan lived from the district and sticking it in a district where he couldn't win? If so, they sure underestimated the Kessler stubbornness. He is staying in District 12 whether he has to rent or buy anew because the voters know his accomplishments. Now he's busy talking to the voters added to District 12 and reminding them of his fascinating long record of public service.

His only opponent on Aug. 14 has a D after his name on the ballot but a strange history. Mario Hall never signed the recall against Scott Walker; he is not registered on the Milwaukee Democratic Party roster. He reportedly has attended "school choice" training in D.C. All that raises fears that the American Federation for Children network and other conservative groups, with a habit of flooding in last minute untraceable campaign money and attacks, may yet cut loose in late August to target a noted Democratic fund-raiser.

Toles' exit leaves unions 2 choices

Union voting families must feel conflicted. Barbara Toles, a stalwart representative who had taken a pay cut from her AFT job teaching at MATC, was known for focusing hard on a few important bills and winning. She worked successfully on apprentice standards and, until the GOP took control, changed the law that allowed indicted Milwaukee police officers to still collect wages. Few expected her to leave the Assembly, but she decided now is the time to look elsewhere in life.

That opened up her seat six months ago, bringing a flood of contenders. She names no preference in the contest to replace her but in a recent chat offered some salient advice that applies to all Milwaukee races and particularly



Fred Royal

Who best to pick up Tamara's causes?

Fully eight people bearing a "Democrat" label have rushed in to a seat that no one wanted to be open. When Tamara Grigsby recovered from a near-death illness last year and returned this year to the Assembly, to applause from both sides, many hoped she would be recovered enough to run again.



But LaShawndra Vernon she needs the time off, so the Assembly will soon miss her tireless work on behalf of social justice, her quiet determined voice for Milwaukee's poor and eloquent dismissal of Republican attacks

Assembly 17

to her District 17 and the neighboring District 18.

"It's still the doors," she said. "It's who works hardest and who is really out there talking to the people in the worst weather as well as the best."

The conflict for unions who are losing one of their best -- in the four person Democratic field to replace her, the two leading contenders also have union prominence.

UAW retiree Fred Royal has had a long personable career holding union offices, working for the HIRE Center and serving on the MATC board.

LaTonya Johnson, a single mother, heads the AFSCME Local 502 that handles child care issues, heads the union's women's committee and is a knowledgeable in-demand speaker on how to help children and handle the sometimes bizarre state regulatory ropes. No surprise: AFSCME's PEOPLE committee endorsed their active leader Johnson while UAW folks are



LaTonya Johnson, speaking at a 9to5 child care forum, is now running hard for a seat in the Assembly.

speaking up for Royal.

Most other unions are staying out of this race because both leading candidates are admired.

But using the Toles test and reports from the street, it is Johnson who has been busiest working the doors.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

Assembly 18

on Milwaukee.

The field includes two progressive candidates who long supported her. Evan Goyke is a politically active young lawyer who lives in the community. LaShawndra Vernon has long been identified as a political insider with a voice that needs more powerful platforms.

Since both are friends of many in the progressive community, and both are well-liked in union circles, many influential residents of the area are taking a wait and see attitude.

They are also carefully watching for a platform and funding involving a third candidate, Jarrett Fields, brother of nearby Rep. Jason Fields and

also a spokesman on school issues. Does he also have access to Jason's national voucher

money network?

But last name and campaign money might not do it in



Evan Goyke

an August election of such delineated boundaries and potent support of Tamara and her principles.

The community is looking for someone to continue Grigsby's work and reputation -- and may not tolerate any interloper cash or viewpoints.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

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NLRB probe into workers' charges stop Palermo vote

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
Labor Press Editor

The claims of intimidation of workers at Palermo Villa have led to postponement of the July 27 union representation election by the National Labor Relations Board. Under the agency's rules, there will be indefinite suspension while the charges are thoroughly investigated on merit.

That NLRB probe will also keep 75 terminated workers in this county untouched and unchallenged by ICE during the investigation. Palermo spokesmen have blamed the firings on ICE concerns over authorized presence. Also left in limbo on whether they will be part of any election process are the 82 workers hired to replace the terminated workers at Palermo facilities on Canal St. in Milwaukee's Menomonee Valley. More than 200 workers could be involved in the ongoing dispute.

"162 permanent employees of the bargaining unit signed a petition for union representation before the strike," said Roberto Silva of the Palermo Workers Union in a press release July 13. "Since then, at least 90 strikers have been unjustly fired. These retaliatory terminations and other violations made the atmosphere at Palermo too intimidating."

In cold legal terms, it will now be months of investigation and interviews by the NLRB before the charges are confirmed or rejected, and only then could any election even be considered. NLRB Region District 30 under director Irving Gottschalk will be in charge of the multi-pronged inquiry.

The delay was required once the complaining party, the Palermo Workers Union, decided not to allow the election to proceed. NLRB procedures view the complaint as serious since it could

affect the Excelsior list, which all sides must agree to in order to hold a consent decree election for a union. Such a list includes names and addresses. The current list reportedly excludes the terminated workers and adds the replacement workers.

In the amended ULP complaint, the attorney for the workers union, Richard Saks, argued that the list was inequitable - not just because the workers were terminated by Palermo the day after the company received a letter from ICE that it was suspending interest in "suspect documents." The ULP also argues that the replacement workers were not subject to the same worker authorization documentation procedures as the workers terminated. In other words, you can't demand one set of papers and not another.

NLRB officials say they will have to interview the workers involved and hold them available for any trial and that ICE (the Immigrant and Customs Enforcement federal agency) will freeze any action while the NLRB, also a federal agency, proceeds.

If the legalities are confusing enough to the public, so is the muddle around current immigration policy. Off the record, ICE officials are upset with claims on both sides, feeling the agency is being scapegoated for following well-established procedures to verify worker documents.

In fact, supporters of Palermo have been forced in large part to the "nice guys" defense, since the founding family also came to these country decades ago as immigrants and have become in the eyes of many "model corporate citizens" in helping charities and civic causes along with their expansion.

Largely on that basis, and its reputation for providing benefits and wage rules in a non-union-

Analysis

supervised environment, the current operators of Palermo claim that only outside agitators are making trouble, everything inside the plant is fine and that it was pressure from ICE's concerns about documents, not unionizing actions, that led to the terminations.

Unexplored in Palermo's press statements is that if the company is found to have hired workers it should have known were suspect, it is the company facing strong financial penalties.

It's all a reminder what a difference time and need make in how America deals with its immigrant population.

Perhaps the current fury over workers in this county without appropriate papers - and suspicion that everyone who speaks Spanish and doesn't look Anglos may not have a right to be in the US - is a temporary aberration brought on by personal economic distress, a shrunken job market and inflamed political extremism.

But certainly it forces hard-working families, particularly Latino families, to jump through legal hoops that simply did not exist when the Falluca family brought its own relatives to America decades ago to help run its bakery, then Palermo pizza res-

taurant and now national frozen pizza operation, educating many through college and business advancement in the process.

Immigrants who succeed in the American dream not only serve as inspiration to newer arrivals, they are according to national studies the hardest to convince that the rules have changed so radically - and hence are prone to quickly respond to the need for good workers by remembering the upward aspirations of the incoming workers. Until the consequences close in.

No one has yet claimed that is the case at Palermo. But ICE's annals are full of stories of well-meaning businesses realizing it was not the workers but the companies facing stiff legal fines for looking the other way to get good help - and then moving to deny any responsibility and get rid of the human evidence.

At Palermo, however, many workers and their supporters now claim that the workers' papers were not questioned hard at the start and that the blame put on ICE interest, however true, was not as much a spur as the unionizing, a company attitude that would be illegal if proven. Partly that is what the investigation at the NLRB is about.

As for the "nice families" argument used by neighbors,

charities that have benefited and even in an op-ed by County Executive Chris Abele, who has received political support from the founders, "These are nice families and nice people, too, working at Palermo until they were fired once they tried to better their lives," complained Saks.

His remarks are echoed by many in the community who are pretty nice people, too - the "nuns on the bus" who rode through the state preaching social justice, the Steelworkers, the Milwaukee Area Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAHA), the Milwaukee teachers union, Voces de la Frontera (which helped organize the workers) and political figures who, like Abele, are concerned about the image of Milwaukee as a good place for all workers, those how have made it like the Palermo founders and those who are trying to make it, like the 75 workers they cheerfully hired before firing.

"We can't let these families just get lost in the shuffle and the hostility," said a Latino senior rallying with the workers but refusing to give his name. "I'm here legally but my name is none of your business," he told Labor Press.

If nothing else, the NLRB investigation gives time for verifiable evidence.



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Couture

From Page 1

cerns about how the Milwaukee County executive and the legislative arm, the County Board, will move forward.

"I think Chris Abele by relying on the media to carry his water is playing the sort of game CEOs do rather than going through the careful process associated with how elected officials make allies," commented one veteran county administrator.

The revelation of The Couture's backing by County Executive Abele came about through a deliberate "leaking" July 10 to the Journal Sentinel, a leak some in Abele's office blamed on one of the 30 or so office outsiders who knew the details --- but others suspect with some authority it came from Abele's own initiative because of a brief delay in information caused by a supervisor.

The story included color renderings and sketches of The Couture but did not reveal the designs of other projects seeking to use the same 2.2 acres.

Exposing The Couture vision in this manner was perceived in some Courthouse chambers as a violation of the procedural agreement with the legislative branch, the County Board, which in fairness has several site proposals

that by law and tradition it must discuss thoroughly before recommending which one should get public land and taxpayer support.

"We are being offered a Hobson's choice," laughed Supervisor Gerry Broderick. "It may be a good choice, but it is still a Hobson's choice," implying pressure to force board members to make up their minds before they know the full details.

The JS story used the name of an investment group that has not been approached about The Couture though it was a big backer of the Moderne - the AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust (HIT) wielding \$4.4 billion in assets and a commitment to union projects. It has actually been approached on another Milwaukee project but not yet directly on The Couture.

"We're flattered to have our name included in any discussion," diplomatically noted a HIT spokesman in D.C. - who then gently pointed out that HIT has a complicated, detailed - and closed-mouth -- investment process.

Defenders of Abele point out "there is nothing wrong with the executive having his own preference among submitted proposals and expressing that view in advance."

"Through the media?" criti-



Developer Rick Barrett

cized one county manager. "Through releasing one set of drawings before the public sees them all or the supervisors have all of them explained? That is how arrogant CEOs work, not elected public officials."

But is it a hangover of Abele's business background or more an effort to get things moving and assure the obvious choice wins?

Few complain loudly since The Couture (like the Moderne, the name is from the French, meaning high fashion) has a lot of compliments from in-the-know supervisors. But respect for the legislative process has long been an issue with Abele's office, some blaming it on his naiveté to politics and some assuming he simply "still thinks he's running a

foundation," sighed Broderick, recalling how he used to both finance and operate Argosy. "He will pay a price if he keeps behaving that way, because the county board does hold the purse strings and the legislative authority."

Certainly there was a strained relationship when Scott Walker was in the Courthouse -- and strained is a polite term. The board is often an 18-headed Hydra with many different positions and opinions to manage -- but that is almost a definition of any legislative body. It is much more functional these days and under new open procedures and a new chair, Marina Dimitrijevic.

As another member put it, "Fortunately we as a body are mature enough to fully weigh the RFPs (recommendations from various projects) and not be sidetracked by political games - but there is a question of whether Abele has actually slowed the process rather than speeded it with the hasty release of his preference. You don't lightly put these people's noses out of joint."

"How petty," said an Abele employee. "Would they really block a project they like if they don't like how the details were released?"

"I know some people think all these steps aren't necessary," said Broderick, who actually likes The Couture. "But this is public land and taxpayer money involved and there are way too many past cases where a failure of due diligence wound up hurting the citizens badly, where both executives and board didn't do their homework. Both sides need to find a way to work responsibly, so paying attention to details and regulations is darned important."

Many forces like the idea behind the Couture, including the Milwaukee Building and Construction Trades Council, AFL-CIO, whose members openly adore the Barrett operation at the Moderne and don't want to see any dispute get in its way. The council's president, Lyle Balistreri, is a big champion of the effort and delighted that the community leaders recognize the caliber his members bring.

Developer Barrett himself - in conversations with the Labor Press and through his public relations arm, Mueller Communications - has always been respectful of the government process. "I understand the procedures and I am perfectly happy to win on merit," he told me.

To this point, that is the view of the County Board, while still respectful of the individual roles played by its committees. The newspaper, in fact, misread a recent chair statement as standing in opposition to Abele and behind Supervisor (and chair of the Committee on Economic and Community Development) Patricia Jursik.

Well, the statement sure took a dig at Abele ("The County

Executive has shown he is uncomfortable with participating in a transparent process for the sale of public land.")

But Dimitrijevic's main point was that ""No one on the Board is saying we are against The Couture proposal; we simply want the opportunity to review it and to ask questions. It is our job, as elected officials."

Jursik withdrew discussion of the transit center replacement proposals from a mid-July meeting in response to what she felt were power games from Abele's office. She was told that development officials appointed by Abele, but supposed to work with both sides, would only be presenting information on The Couture. "Democracy," said one board aide "requires hearing all the proposals no matter which one we think best."

After her action, "someone" leaked the full renderings of The Couture and Abele's support of that project above all others to the press. The other proposals are from Ryan Cos, a Minnesota company, Irgens and from Wangard Partners Inc. The latter two have other construction business with the county. That may be why Abele's office says all these developers are comfortable with what happened, but others in the development community say they really wanted full vetting through the board process.

"I had also seen The Couture plans early," said Bob Bauman, the city alderman deeply involved in downtown development, "because the developer had the courtesy of showing me the details extensively and making sure I was in sync." The other projects didn't approach him.

Aside from design and skilled workers, one of The Couture selling points is it wouldn't be competing office space for nearby buildings. But investment approaches differ and smooth relationships play a part.

There has been a pattern, both sides concede, of conflict built into the division of county government, where the executive makes many appointments that are supposed to share and cooperate with the board and the board has veto power over executive decisions. The tensions reached fever pitch when Walker was in office and many believe that will subside and cooperation grows with new leadership. It may be no coincidence that more downtown construction is booming in Milwaukee once such tension departed.

So supporters of The Couture, a widespread group including union organizations, worried that trying to put it at the front of the line may actually slow the process down if it becomes a pawn in confrontational politics. In this instance, that does not seem the case, but future relations are important.

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