



Linda Clifford, a clear choice for Supreme Court going into the race, became the only choice once reporters poked into her opponent's record. See story on Page 14.

April 3 General Election Labor Supports

Linda Clifford, Wisconsin Supreme Court
Milwaukee Circuit Court Branch 26
William Pocan (incumbent)
Municipal Judge Branch 3
Phil Chavez
Milwaukee School Board
At Large (citywide) - Bama Brown-Grice
District 2 - Wendell Harris Sr.
District 3 - Stephanie Findley
District 8 - Terrance Falk
See Story on Page 15



William Pocan



Phil Chavez



Bama Brown-Grice



Wendell Harris Sr.



Stephanie Findley



Terrance Falk

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MILWAUKEE COUNTY LABOR COUNCIL, AFL-CIO

Vol. 67, No. 3



MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN



Thursday, March 22, 2007



(USPS 350-360)

Over-REACH? PIC's reactions to workforce changes prompt hard look at its own leadership

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press (c)

On February 23, the long-standing and very long introduction of regular panelist Gerard Randall was cut in half on "InterCHANGE," the weekend local public TV talk show. Dropped by moderator Dan Jones was "a member of the UW System Board of Regents."

Now Randall is in the fight of his public life to keep the other half of the intro and keep it meaningful — "President and CEO of the Private Industry Council of Milwaukee County" — not just on "InterCHANGE," but on Mark Belling's Channel 58 talk show and radio visits.

As of this writing, nary a public word of criticism about Randall has passed the lips of Gov. Doyle and Mayor Tom Barrett. Yet by the end of March the Wisconsin Council on Workforce Investment is expected



PIC CEO Gerard Randall

to endorse shifting to the mayor the central authority for the Milwaukee County Workforce Development Board. That has been PIC's role for decades and Randall's claim to executive fame — funneling more than \$100 million in federal workforce dollars.

In an interview, Randall conceded that the federal Workforce Investment Act allowed the mayor of a large city to step in (22 of the largest US cities apparently have) but he stated

flatly that Barrett couldn't take control countywide until Congress reauthorized the WIA funds.

Federal experts contacted by the Labor Press said Randall is wrong, the current WIA allows that expansion.

Ironically, only his fellow Republican and nominal boss, County Executive Scott Walker, has publicly criticized Randall's management. But Walker was plugging for one giant workforce board for the Milwaukee region.

The county exec apparently did not realize that the new M7 alliance of seven counties for economic development has already locked in funded links among its workforce boards.

The mayor's office has been central in gaining a multi-million WIRED grant from the US Department of Labor (DOL) for all three boards to plan and coordinate development. There is one board to handle Kenosha, Racine and Walworth counties and another known as WOW (for Waukesha Ozaukee Washington).

The outline on the Milwaukee table is that the Mayor's new Office of Workforce Development, under Donald Sykes, would take the four months before the new fiscal year, July 1, to keep programs and staff in place while it evaluates the existing entities, available funds and best practices and develops a new budget and a clearer idea of who should be involved for Milwaukee County.

"We're making no decisions until after a full evaluation," said a spokesman for the mayor contacted on March 8.

Randall's response has been

PIC woes also tale of 2 buildings



As dislocated workers are tested in the Learning Lab, HIRE director Alba Baltodano confers with her one full-time and one part-time teachers about how to stretch pinched resources.

The physical contrast is remarkable. Modernized but clearly struggling. Old and clumsy but clearly humming. This tale of two buildings plays a revealing role in the fate of the Private Industry Council (PIC) as the conduit for federal workforce development funds.

By Dominique Paul Noth, Milwaukee Labor Press

At 27th St. and North Avenue sits a warehouse professionally expanded, renovated and upgraded, festooned with bright signs and boasting a big youth center, an alternative public high school, corporate offices for the Private Industry Council (PIC) and spaces for businesses and nonprofits.

Ample private parking was two-thirds empty on three separate visits. The H & R. Block business was dark and vacant during tax season. The REACH Institute youth center that blankets the north side of the building had no traffic. Unattended was TALC New Vision, an office for a small schools learning initiative. Only inside the locked-down north campus of Kilmer High School, an MPS school where 205 part-time students work in shifts toward GEDs, was something going on.

On National Avenue near 8th St., also a tough-nut area for employment, resides another major operation using federal workforce money dispensed through PIC. The HIRE Center for dislocated workers actually

HIRE continued Page13

A House herald for workers' rights



Rep. Gwen Moore led a Milwaukee labor media conference days before her half of Congress resoundingly passed the Employee Free Choice Act. Now the pressure turns to the Senate and a threatened presidential veto. Story on Page 10.

PIC continued Page 12

Please wait to exhale, AFL-CIO asks all its affiliates

Comment

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

On March 7, with presidential fever building earlier than ever before, the AFC-CIO Executive Council did a very smart thing. It told everyone to slow down and listen.

It asked all its 54 national unions to set up an intense bottom-up process to involve and educate its members through candidate forums, meetings on issues, surveys and worker-to-worker discussions. It asked all unions and labor councils to get busy organizing those.

But it also asked – and probably secretly begged – those 54 unions to keep their endorsement powder dry.

In other words, hold off on running around announcing for presidential candidates during the next six months.

Unions are being urged – and it would be shrewd for other federations to weigh this – to give themselves and the AFL-CIO some breathing and evaluating room in what is shaping up as a volatile seesaw contest with many formal and informal tests for the year ahead.

The idea is not to tamp down interest and even rock-star attention to the candidates. Quite the contrary.

But it is a reminder of how unions diluted their power by pulling in several directions way too early.

The AFL-CIO's general board will make a decision in September if or who to back. That will be sufficient months ahead of the first primaries. And that primary season has changed, with states in the West and South early in the mix. Wisconsin still



hopes it will maintain a, shall we say, primary position with its schedule, but the early action will send candidates scuttling all over.

Of course, the AFL-CIO hopes all member unions will agree with any future choice, particularly if it comes after thought and measuring the moods and wishes of members.

But right now there are a lot of mixed feelings and mixed enthusiasms – and millions of dollars entering the attention-getting pool. Some of that will inevitably be wasted.

So the hiatus is not just for the workers to learn more and hear more, it is also an effort to prevent unions from prematurely pressing each other or painting other unions into a corner when a lot of questions are unanswered and before candidate behavior could shoot contenders up or down.

That certainly happened in 2003 in the last run for the White House.

Quick now, does anyone remember the Democratic candidate who got the earliest enthusiasm and volunteers from labor? It was Dick Gephardt, a working class icon and devoted champion

of labor causes in the House. But he was the whip who encouraged his colleagues to support the Iraq war resolution.

In 2003, the latter didn't seem as consequential as the former, but that was not true in just a few months. There were also runaway union pushes for Howard Dean, interest in John Edwards—even some who thought labor should take a long look at Joe Lieberman.

By the time John Kerry was heading into the home stretch, unions had pulled many different ways. It doesn't take a long memory to recall what a tough job it was to get them to pull together later. "Anyone But Bush" is a great slogan until you put a face on the poster.

Now comes quite a different presidential election. First, it WILL be anyone but Bush. The Republicans don't have as exciting a group of contenders but certainly a varied lot. Who wudda thunk a year ago that conservative John McCain would not be conservative enough for the GOP base, but that Rudy Giuliani would, with Mitt Romney sneaking up on the siderail?

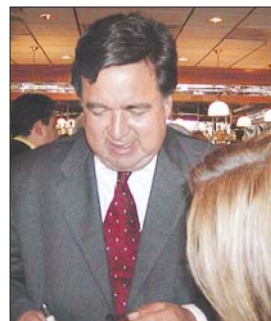
All that could change quickly as candidate says things or keep trying not to say things – or if they fall into any of the traps set by the media, the opposition or even their own party rivals.

But what could happen in one party can certainly happen in the other.

The Democratic side does shape up as a more robust debate about fixing the past and generat-



Remember 2003? Not that you'd want to in political terms, but that's when (from left) Dick Gephardt, Howard Dean and John Edwards all hit Milwaukee union meetings and even won endorsements in the presidential race. For the 2008 contest, only Edwards is back. Expect Hillary Clinton to show up, but Barack Obama (left below) and Bill Richards (right below) on have already dabbled toes in the Wisconsin waters. The AFL-CIO is asking its member unions to hold off on early endorsements this time. Not only elephants have long memories.



ing a future. But invective or split camp could also chill the heat generated for Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and John Edwards. And don't forget a pretty entertaining "second tier" including Joe Biden, Chris Dodd and, with Western states in the primary mix, New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson. (Does anyone recall that, except for Bush the First, every president in the last three decades was first a governor?)

Authenticity, smarts, candor, rolling with the punches and counter-punching – the more you think about it, there are political reasons to take some time. And a financial imperative to store ammunition.

All this may sound too sly and strategic. Isn't there a place in the campaign for emotion, chemistry and a heart as well as a pragmatic way to seek the best?

Yes, indeed, and if that's the most important thing it would be good to hear from the grassroots, to give the actual voters time to listen and learn.

For unions it's even more than that, and it was pegged by AFSCME International President Gerald McEntee, who has been tapped to chair the AFL-CIO Political Committee.

"Our members are more than just voters – they're messengers," said McEntee "They're activists. They're the roots in the grassroots. So they're the drivers in this process."

"We're not going to act as individual unions."

This hardly means that union members are going to sit back for six months. The AFL-CIO is going to activate big guns around issues and bills of clearly universal importance, such as the Employee Free Choice Act

Recent history has demonstrated that unions are mighty good at this – in 2006 some 13.6 million union voters were mobilized in 32 states to support candidates.

The AFL-CIO Executive Council, we should point out, made its plea at a meeting in Las Vegas – where you don't win by bidding against the house. Until you build your own house.

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Look who's listening to labor experts now

On national TV

Front and center. There she was in a February series on globalization on the PBS News Hour with Jim Lehrer. Its expert economic reporter, Paul Solman, had chosen the AFL-CIO policy director, Thea Lee, to dwell into the nuances as well as the organized labor view, which now matches much of the Democratic view, of what's wrong with trade deals and the US approach to globalization.

It was a provocative segment, with Solman playing devil's advocate and throwing at Lee every confrontational view that several viewers would associate with the standard justifications of transnational corporations. Lee threw every ball back harder.

The News Hour, one of the few national news programs to also deal with the House passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, customarily seeks balance on major issues. It now recognizes unions as among the balanced. And there are other undercurrents in the elevation of labor experts into intellectual discourse with economists and authors.

Labor leaders have quietly been radiating out to commercial network news (with the exception of FOX), sought out for comment on everything from Chinese currency to budget legislation.

The change may be temporary recognition of how much labor had to do with the takeover of Congress.

But something else may be going on, a change in a traditional media stiff-arm. Unions, still associated with street screaming and cigar-chewing strikes, are belatedly recognized as newly sophisticated, erudite and reflecting American views far broader than their 12.5% national membership.

They can talk and chew gum



Union leaders Lyle Balistreri and Sheila Cochran (right) waited to be heard by the legislative labor hearing (above) — and this time their turns came early.

at the same time. They may have insights worth looking to. Maybe there is something intellectual as well as muscular about the voice from the streets.

Why has it taken modern media so long to see that? In the past, America seemed to embrace the two sides of the labor movement — common touch and philosophical underpinnings. The same leaders who took to those streets also represented some of our most eloquent authors, essayists, historians, policy thinkers, elected officials and even judges.

Today, though, corporate PR has dominated. Yet the complexities of regulations, organizing and creating social progress have actually created a new breed of labor leaders, folks who still need people empathy to gain status but also must master a complexity of courses in economics and law.

It is almost standard to find union leaders whose self-education or formal education match in persuasion, degrees and mind power the graduates of the Harvard Business School (with a little different tilt, of course — Harvard has only recently mandated corporate ethics).

At state hearings

Even Milwaukee initiatives reflect labor's newly important



place at the legislative table.

That was nowhere clearer than in the placement of union leaders March 6 at the Northside YMCA, where state legislative leaders gathered for feedback, almost universally positive, on the Milwaukee Initiative pushed in Gov. Doyle's new two-year budget.

These are extensive \$80-\$100 million proposals to aid schools, research, workforce development and more, reflecting the long-neglected reality that improving Milwaukee improves the economy of the entire state.

With quibbles here and there — and with Republican Sen. Glenn Grothman muttering on the sidelines to indicate that he will

create tough going where he can from other Republican out-state legislators — the Milwaukee Initiative within the budget is an essential component of what both sides concede is the most progressive state budget in decades.

The sequence of commentators was also revealing. Shortly after Mayor Tom Barrett as opening local speaker came Sheila Cochran, secretary-treasurer of the Milwaukee County Labor Council, followed 30 minutes later by Lyle Balistreri, president of the Milwaukee Building & Construction Trades Council, both AFL-CIO. The key stakeholders, including the Milwaukee Public Schools, housing representatives and local

business were also at the front of the testimony line.

Cochran noted with some sly amusement that it was a deep pleasure to testify before a Senate Committee on Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs finally not chaired by a Republican but by a Democratic Milwaukee legislator and urban dweller, Spencer Coggins.

And to finally see a budget concentrated on the need for inner city jobs and growing community wages.

— D.P.N.

Rights legend leads APRI history event

A legend in and witness to the civil rights movement and the push for full voting rights will lead a special history program and membership drive for the Milwaukee chapter of the A. Philip Randolph Institute on Saturday, April 14.

Norman Hill, president emeritus of APRI, will join Sheila D. Cochran, chief operating officer and secretary-treasurer of the Milwaukee County Labor Council, as main speakers for "Revisiting the Past . . . Looking to the Future," scheduled for 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Laborers Local 113 Hall, 6310 W. Appleton Ave.

There is both a continental breakfast and a lunch. Everyone is welcome.

Health-hygiene drive underway

The AFL-CIO Community Services staff and volunteers are again gathering paper and hygiene products — and the donations to fill the gaps in such items by purchase at union stores — in the annual Health and Hygiene Drive. It concludes the first week of June.

Union members have been a generous part of this effort for more than a decade. The two-dozen homeless shelters served get a psychological and health lift — and can focus their budgets on other needs since unions have historically filled this need for them.

To participate, contact Annie Wacker, also vice president of the labor council, at (414) 771-9830, at anniefclcio@sbcglobal.net, or in Suite 106, 633 S. Hawley Rd.

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Mastodon Mitch stalks Senate

It's no surprise that organized labor's higher visibility has brought the re-emergence of knee-jerk knee-capping and a reminder that dinosaurs still roam the Senate and White House. These twins of antiquity on domestic policy could lead to a series of presidential vetoes that are all about unions.

The overreaching in union dislike is wending its way through Congress in, of all things, a stronger homeland security bill. Versions have passed both houses and are in committee reconciliation.

The bill gives both Democrats and the White House -- and the public -- a lot of what they all want: Approval of the lingering recommendations from the 9/11 commission, a restructuring of how and why anti-terrorist money flows to the states, whistleblower protection and smoother structure and more attention to both airports and railroads.

Yet the Republicans in the Senate are threatening to filibuster (requiring 60 votes, not a mere majority to stop them) and the president is threatening a veto that requires 67 votes to override -- and it's all over one item:

That item restores to airport screeners the same collective bargaining rights that other federal employees enjoy.

This is neither a big-ticket nor a big-problem issue. Those rights are enshrined for 53,000 customs, border patrol and immigration workers within the Department of Homeland Security.

Yet Republicans argue -- falsely as it turns out, since federal unions have proved remarkably nimble in security duties -- that in the interest of flexibility the government needs to be able to bully, fire and prevent a voice at work for the nation's airport passenger and baggage screeners.

Worse was the false patriotism and demeaning of union workers framed by GOP Minority Leader Mitch McConnell on the Senate floor: "We're not going to let big labor compromise national security," he said.

McConnell is married to Elaine Chao, the only surviving original cabinet member in the Bush administration (this is hardly the time when the president can afford to offend the minority leader). She is the secretary of labor, and she has also come out on the side of big business on EFCA and other issues, though her duty is to serve as a balancing wheel, not a slave to her masters (be they Bush or McConnell).

The illogic of McConnell's statement is worth examining. It directly revives the suggestion that being a union member is somehow unpatriotic, even while the children of union members are active volunteers in the military.

It reminds citizens that the GOP had no trouble compromising national security by suggesting that foreign countries run the US ports or that privateers descend 100,000 strong on Iraq and also handle outpatient services at Walter Reed hospital.

(Yes, Walter Reed. It turns out that IAP Worldwide Services, a contractor with ties to the Bush administration and Halliburton, won a \$120 million contract to maintain and operate Walter Reed facilities. The contract reversed an Army finding that it would be more cost-effective to keep the work in-house. One Army general told McConnell's own Senate in hearing testimony that privatization "absolutely" contributed to the maintenance problems at Walter Reed.

Yet to McConnell, the big scare is unions, an attitude from a different century (not the 20th but the 19th). Apparently, the biggest threat to our country is the American worker speaking up.

The very nature of the objection is an insult, noted John Gage, president of the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO. But it seems precisely the sort of sideshow the Bush administration wants to hang its fading reputation on.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

Labor from Cold War on subject of history event

Madison, Wis. -- Labor's involvement in our nation's foreign affairs will be the topic of the 26th annual conference of the Wisconsin Labor History Society to be held Saturday, April 28, at the Union South on the UW-Madison campus, 227 N. Randall Ave.

The conference will look at the turbulent era from the beginning of the Cold War up to the current "war on terrorism," and how various portions of the labor movement impacted the nation's policies -- and caused turmoil within organized labor.

Sessions will be held from 8:30 a.m. through 2:45 p.m. at the Union South.

Greg Grandin, professor of history at New York University and a major scholar on Central and Latin American history as it affects the US, will be keynote speaker at 11:10 a.m. His many books, include "Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism."

A morning panel discussion, led by Prof. Will Jones of UW History Department, will include Susanna Rasmussen, whose grandmother, the late Darina Rasmusen, faced the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1955; David Nack of the UW School for Workers who will outline labor's involvement in the Cold War, and Frank Emspak, also School for Workers, who will discuss labor victims of the Cold War.

An afternoon panel will discuss "American Labor, Recent Foreign Policy and War," and will be moderated by David Newby, president of the Wisconsin AFL-CIO. Participants will include Prof. Kim Scipes, a onetime union organizer who will discuss recent labor diplomacy and its opposition, and Carol Weidel, of the US Labor Against the War organization and a former president of AFT-Wisconsin.

Both panels will open time for audience participation.

The Wisconsin Labor History Society will then hold its annual meeting at 2:45 p.m. Officers will be elected and other business will be included.

The conference is co-sponsored by Wisconsin AFL-CIO, the South Central Federation of Labor, UW-Extension School for Workers, the UW-Madison History Department, the Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Iberian Studies and the NAVE Fund at UW-Madison, the Harvey Goldberg Center for the Study of Contemporary History at UW-Madison.

The conference is also funded in part by a grant from the Wisconsin Humanities Council, with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the State of Wisconsin.

Registration fees are \$25 (\$15 for students or unemployed persons), and include luncheon and materials. The conference may be audited for free, with prior registration. Send registration information and checks made out to Wisconsin Labor History Society, to WLHS, 6333 W. Blue Mound Rd., Milwaukee WI 53216.

AFL-CIO MILWAUKEE LABOR PRESS
 THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MILWAUKEE COUNTY LABOR COUNCIL, AFL-CIO
 633 S. HAWLEY ROAD MILWAUKEE, WI 53214

Published Monthly by the Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO
 www.milwaukeeelabor.org

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ILCA INTERNATIONAL LABOR COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION
AFL-CIO Milwaukee Labor Press
 Editorial and Business Office
 633 S. Hawley Road, Milwaukee, WI 53214
 Telephone (414) 771-7070 FAX (414) 771-0509
 E-mail: laborprs@execpc.com

THE MILWAUKEE LABOR PRESS (USPS 350-360) is published once a month by the Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO, 633 S. Hawley Rd., Milwaukee, WI 53214, and is also available by subscription for \$12 a year: Non-profit periodical postage paid at MILWAUKEE, WI.
 POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the MILWAUKEE LABOR PRESS, 633 S. Hawley Rd., Suite 110, Milwaukee, WI 53214.
 The Publisher reserves the right to refuse or discontinue any advertisement which is deemed objectionable. Publication of advertisements is not to be construed as a personal endorsement nor are all ads necessarily from unionized companies or services of the Milwaukee County Labor Council or any of its affiliates.
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State's New Alliance wrestles past old impediments

It's about success, not structure. David Newby used slides of the seesaw in 21st century politics to drive that point at the Milwaukee listening session Feb. 26 for the New Alliance concept.

After the 2000 election, Newby's slides emphasized, labor organizations were forced to play "Defense," to limit the damage to working families, the plunge of more families into poverty, the fight to keep jobs here and the erosion of the middle class.

Wisconsin in 2002 brought a touch of Hope, but turned back to Defense after the elections of 2004. 2006 injected considerable new Hope with tenuous control of the US Congress and the state Senate.

But can Hope be turned this year into real gains and changes by getting the right legislation and the best candidates to carry the state and the country into 2008 and beyond?

Unions need to re-organize to do it. They represent only one of eight workers in the US (though a much better stronger one-in-six in Wisconsin), but at the polls and as community activists they have pulled more than their membership weight.

But unions are realists. They have shrunk. In certain races and on major issues, they've also lost ground. They need to re-examine and grow their current strength.

So how in Wisconsin should labor structure itself to maximize Hope and achieve enduring success?

That, said the president of the state AFL-CIO and other leaders, pinpoints the urgency of the New Alliance efforts.

It is a hard look at how the state, central and various labor councils in Wisconsin should maximize their organization, geography, financing and cooperation for specific major achievements.

Those goals are a basic part of the mission:

- A year-round mobilization effort that wins elections.
- An alliance that advances a legislative agenda that benefits working families.
- Better ways for labor coun-

cils to support their affiliates and increase the labor movement in Wisconsin.

There's a lot of speculation and some understandable mystery about how the New Alliance concept will evolve and take shape by early summer. The mystery is actually shared by the planners.

The 10 other states where the New Alliance concept is being worked out or actually has taken hold may provide indications, but they are not giveaways. Each state is different.

That's why openness ("everything is on the table") and feedback from the listening sessions were emphasized by the facilitator and contact person for the Wisconsin New Alliance, Todd Anderson, the Midwest regional director of field mobilization, AFL-CIO.

With Sue Ledbetter, an AFL-CIO field expert familiar to Milwaukeeans from her handling of the successful Labor 2006 campaign effort, Anderson is conducting the listening sessions through April around the state.

Three dozen persons attended the Milwaukee event, including members of the alliance's various planning committees and representatives from several unions.

They were not just local. Green Bay, Dodge County and Madison labor leaders also attended.

Future meetings will bring together the ideas from the listening sessions, the suggestions from special committees and the advice of the Wisconsin New Alliance co-chairs, International Vice-President of the AFL-CIO Linda Chavez-Thompson and President of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers Greg Junemann.

Transcripts of the speaking out will be shared with the Wisconsin New Alliance to help shape the future.

Newby pointed out that it is the effectiveness of local labor councils — and the need to maximize the effectiveness across the board — that is driving the effort, rather than some scheme to eradicate councils.

Indeed, back in 2004, after



MCLC Vice-President Annie Wacker transcribes comments verbatim to share with committee members during the Milwaukee feedback.

the disappointment of the presidential election, there was a national split, with some unions leaving the national AFL-CIO to form a Change to Win federation while several independent unions stuck with their own national way.

All these unions expressed concern, even horror, if there were any loss in cooperation within local and state labor councils. The value of local coordination was maintained as the AFL-CIO issued Solidarity Charters regardless of national federations and pushed new partnerships with other unions and a range of community and citizens groups.

But there are dynamic and droning labor councils. Aside from the state federation Newby heads, Wisconsin has 29 AFL-CIO labor councils, several extremely engaged, several that would confess they're not.

"Being a social club is nice, but it is not what we're there for," said one attendee. "A labor council should be far more than a Fourth of July picnic or a Christmas party."

In any re-examination, there are historical questions and pride involved along with issues of funding and territorial turf. The comments at the listening sessions touched on the range of worries and desires.

Is bigger better? Is smaller more nimble? There is general consensus that Milwaukee and Madison, two of the largest and urban central labor councils, are the most active in social, political and community services, but do these urban models apply throughout the state? Are some labor councils regarded as "passive" simply because they work more quietly or have no staffs? Is there a danger from forced marriages?

Newby and other committee leaders, such as Dan Sherman of the IBEW, pointed out that the purpose was to elevate local identity and increase rank-and-file involvement. So the questions revolve around maximizing function and missions while retaining and even expanding the local cooperation that many labor councils embody.

A constant theme in the ses-

sion in appearance. Newby called it crucial because democracy and the economy will just dribble away without better laws, better elected officials and more committed mutual support among union members — and unions remain a major component of shaping the debate and getting the message out. "We're not spending all this time if we didn't think we could make it better," he said.

The New Alliance has created two major sub-committees to resolve some key issues.

One is the the Mapping and Finance sub-committee, responsible for reviewing the boundaries and budgets of Central Labor Councils and the state AFL-CIO. It will present recommendations for changes, and its investigation, while undecided, will include the concept of Area Labor Federations.

Paula Dorsey, secretary of the Milwaukee chapter of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) and also president of AFSCME District Council 48, and Sherman, business manager of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Local 2150, are the co-chairs.

The second sub-committee, Governance and Coordination, will review governance structures and consider a strategic planning system for greater coordination. Co-chairs are Jon Geenen, director of the United Steelworkers (USW), District 2, and Mike Ryan, who is retiring at the end of this month as president of the Laborers District Council (LIUNA).

A full list of the members of the Wisconsin New Alliance can be found on our website:

www.milwaukeeelabor.org
To add your comments, attend listening sessions or otherwise get involved, contact Anderson, 651-665-9196 or Tanderso@afclio.org, or Ledbetter, 414-476-2896 or at sledbett@afclio.org



Dozens of members of the state's various labor councils shared their views during the Milwaukee listening session.

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Just what were those labor people doing in that room?

Walking down the corridor from another event at Serb Hall, a retiree stopped me to ask, "What's been going on in there?"

It was about 8 p.m. and about 50 people were still chatting and joking after a crowded meeting.

"The labor council," I said. "Labor? Unions? What are they up to?"

No sure where this was going, and a bit apprehensive,

I didn't detail that Mayor Tom Barrett had just spoken, final COPE recommendations had been approved for the April 3 election, rallies had been announced, important meetings and campaigns had been promoted and voting had just been completed on which 15 of 16 candidates would serve on the executive council.

"Oh," I said instead, "Just the monthly meeting of the dele-

gates."

And then the retiree surprised me.

"You know," he said, "I haven't seen labor people look this happy for years. It's great, isn't it? And good for them."

I hadn't noticed, but the casual passerby had. Apparently, he had never belonged to a union, but it sure seemed that he wished he had.

I took another look at the delegates and the meeting that, frankly, I had started to take for granted.

Along with the animated chatter, there was a little more lift in the step, a lilt in the laughter, a sense of change. Or at least a belief in the power to change.

The secretary-treasurer of the Milwaukee County Labor Council, Sheila Cochran, had

promised months ago that the meetings would be busier with news, speakers and opportunity.

This meeting pushed the promise to the limit, but the delegates didn't run from it. More like to it.

For a dozen of them, it actually began an hour and half early, when the Committee on Political Education (COPE) met in a side room, interviewed its final round of candidates and made final choices left undecided before the crowded primary.

Now COPE was pushing all its affiliates to get active in all the major judicial and school board races on the Milwaukee ballot April 3.

For how they decided, see Page 1. For more details on why they decided, see Pages 14 and 15.

Those recommendations were quickly endorsed by the crowded room of delegates at the 6:30 p.m. meeting.

The crowd also got a rapid outline from the mayor about his agenda.

Barrett has been busy laying out these ideas for weeks, but there was a campaign fever in this presentation, and a positive campaign reaction though he is a year away from re-election. And that

fever remained though he pushed issues labor is obviously friendly to, and candidly laid out some issues he expects disagreement on.

There was no disagreement on his intention to become the workforce development leader for the community, a new role for City Hall. Barrett, a lifelong resident, suggested that 30 years ago there was no reason for the mayor to be involved, because residents had jobs in abundance.

But times have changed, large factories have nearly vanished and unemployment has led to decay and despair, particularly for the central city.

Barrett has also become distressed by what he has long described as "ships passing in the night" - employers desperate for workers and inner city residents equally desperate for good jobs. The current system failed to connect them, or lay the education groundwork for future growth. Barrett says he's not just stepping in but will hold himself accountable for command and results.

He remains a "lifelong supporter of prevailing wage," he said, but as mayor he has got to find a way to create jobs for areas of the community where unemployment has become embedded (as much as 70%). He touched on social realities he had previously discussed in detail, such as how two-thirds of the state's incarcerated population return to a handful of Milwaukee ZIP codes, and to broken families that don't have resources to help them.

Barrett left the details to private talks with unions but said he must work with organized labor to assure that more and more Milwaukee residents, not those in outlying communities, are beneficiaries of any job boom -- and he doesn't mean just the flood of new construction. He means the jobs in those buildings.

He pleaded for understanding and cooperation from unions as he heads the community for fuller employment at good wages.

He also urged support for his public safety push, not just more police officers but getting illegal handguns off the street. He outlined increases in summer youth employment - with union support on connecting employers and jobs. Barrett says he offers young people three pragmatic reasons to participate - "to put some money in your pocket, to give you a taste of work and to keep you out of trouble."

He answered questions from the crowd, dealing with his plan for a transit system that connects buses, trains and streetcars and outlining his commitment to dislocated workers as well as the new faces needed at worksites to replace retiring baby boomers.

After his speech, delegates heard council leaders and members describe a range of initiatives unions are engaged, as wide as the Iraqi war, as local as video service. As these discussions went on, delegates drifted in and out of a side room to cast their votes for executive council. The votes of the delegates are in representative proportion to the size of the locals and unions they serve. Each ballot had to reflect 15 choices.

In that executive council election, the delegates retained the 13 members of the board who were seeking re-election and added two new members: Andy Voelzke of USW Local 2-209 and Kenneth Roberts of Local 577M, Graphics Communications Council/International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

The new board, along with the previously re-elected officers, will be inducted at the April 4 meeting. Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Louis Butler is scheduled to do the honors.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

Back Pain?

Menomonee Falls, WI - According to a recently released back pain relief report, most back pain sufferers have no idea how to eliminate their pain. Some use heat, others ice. From sleeping on the floor, to pillows underneath the legs, back pain relief techniques vary. But thanks to a free report, local back pain sufferers finally know exactly what to do. To get a copy of the free "Back Pain Relief Report", call toll-free, 1-888-302-1889. (Toll-free, 24 hour recorded message)



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A busy delegate night started early when COPE – and eventually some candidates – crowded into a tight Serb Hall niche laughingly called the “boardroom” to make its final choices for the April 3 general election. LEFT: Then it was another sort of election during the regular meeting, as delegates stopped by a side room to make their 15 choices for the MCLC executive board. The returning 13 members all won and will be joined by two new board members (below, left to right) Kenneth Roberts and Andy Voelzke.



Mayor's high moment



Mayor Tom Barrett had a happier task after speaking to the delegates – a hallway game of high five with Nzingha, daughter of Le Ann Minor, the legislative director for ATU Local 998.

Bowling

MCLC MIXED SENIOR BOWLING

FEBRUARY 2007 RESULTS

TEAM	WINS	LOSSES
GUTTER RATS	105	70
1. BOARD OVER	100 1/2	74 1/2
LABORERS 113	87	88
CRAZY 8's	81 1/2	93 1/2
8 BALLS	76	99
SLAMMERS	75	93

IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 540	
BOB WAGNER	661
SAM SAMUELSON	599
WALLY GEISE	592
BOB WAGNER	588
DAN LAACK	584
DEL GROSS	563
JOHN PADRON	550
WAYNE FRANZEN	543

IND. HIGH GAME OVER 190	
DAN LAACK	265
BOB WAGNER	246
SAM SAMUELSON	226
DAN LAACK	226
DON PHILLIPS	212
WALLY GEISE	211
DEL GROSS	201
JOHN PADRON	199
DON WIEDMANN	191

IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 400	
RAE MATOWSKI	522
PHYLLIS NAVARRETE	447
LAVERNE WERNER	416
MARLENE CRUZ	408

IND. HIGH GAME OVER 140	
RAE MATOWSKI	176
MARLENE CRUZ	168
PHYLLIS NAVARRETE	167
LAVERNE WERNER	167
ELAINE KARIER	149

Calendar

Wednesday, March 28

MCLC Executive Board

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

Tuesday, April 3

Spring General Election

Make sure to vote! See Page 1 and Pages 15-16 for labor's endorsed candidates. Polls open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Wednesday, April 4

Delegate Meeting

Milwaukee County Labor Council, AFL-CIO
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Louis Butler will swear in the officers and new board.

Saturday, April 14

APRI History Program and Membership Drive

Led by A. Philip Randolph Institute
President Emeritus Norman Hill and
MCLC's Sheila Cochran. See Page 3.
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Laborers Local 113 Hall, 6310 W. Appleton Ave.

Everyone Welcome. Continental breakfast and lunch.

Wednesday, April 25

MCLC Executive Board

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

Friday, April 27

Workers Memorial Day Annual Event

Join us in Mourning the Dead, Fighting for the Living
Special ceremonies 5 p.m. Zeidler Union Square Park
See story Page 8.

Wednesday, May 2

Delegate Meeting

Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

Sunday, May 6

Bay View Tragedy Remembrance

3 p.m., Bay View Historical Marker,
corner of S. Superior St. and E. Russell Ave
See Page 8 for speakers and details

For updates visit www.milwaukeekeelabor.org

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Employee Free Choice Act - New Opportunity for Workers or Betrayal of Democracy?

The WI LERA Chapter, an organization of labor, management and neutrals involved in labor relations, is hosting a debate on the recently passed EFCA law at our April Dinner meeting.

Speakers: Mary Beth Maxwell — American Rights at Work
James Sherk — Bradley Fellow in Labor Policy
Heritage Foundation

Date: Wednesday April 25, 2007

Place: Alioto's Restaurant
3042 N. Mayfair Road
Wauwatosa, WI

For Reservations:
Sue Donohue Davis, 414-229-4009
suedono@uwvm.edu

Time: Social hour - 5 PM to 6 PM

Dinner - 6 PM to 7 PM
Speakers - 7 PM

Fees: Members - \$25,
Non-Members \$30
Students/Retirees - \$20

GOOD JOBS SAFE JOBS IT'S TIME

Plan to remember

At 5 p.m. Friday, April 27, at Milwaukee workers' own Downtown park, Zeidler Union Square, 4th and Michigan, speakers and citizens will gather to remember all those who died on the job in Wisconsin last year and all our state's military fallen in 2006.

Everyone can participate in this day of mourning -- and join the pledge for a safer, healthier society for all workers.

Memorial black ribbons and stickers with this year's theme -- "Good Jobs. Safe Jobs. It's Time" -- will be distributed to unions throughout the area.

The Milwaukee County Labor Council is asking all affiliates to have their members wear the reminder ribbon (25 cents each with a roll of stickers) at work as well as in the community. Ribbons in quantity (small quantities can be mailed) are available at the April delegate meeting or from the council offices, 633 S. Hawley Rd., call 414-771-7070. Any mail orders must be received by April 18.

Technically, Workers Memorial Day is April 28, a Saturday, but the Milwaukee remembrance will be held a day earlier, at the end of the regular workweek.

Speakers are still being lined up, but as is tradition, the gatherings will adjourn to the nearby American Postal Workers Union Hall at 417 N. 3rd St. for a home-cooked Mexican dinner. Cost of the meal is \$12.50 in advance and \$15 at the door. For a table of six the cost will be \$60. For reservations call WisCOSH, the worker safety and health training organization, at 414-933-2338 or email to info@wiscosh.org.

Nationally, the remembrance is sponsored by the AFL-CIO, which notes that in 2006 twice as many coal miners died on the job over previous years and that the records indicate an alarming spike in immigrant worker deaths in such fields as construction.

The Milwaukee event is sponsored by WisCOSH, the Wisconsin AFL-CIO and the MCLC.

Bay View event dedicated to Zeidler

The 121st anniversary of the 1886 Bay View Tragedy will be commemorated at 3 p.m., Sunday, May 6, 2007, at the Bay View Historical Marker at S. Superior St. and E. Russell Ave., about one-half mile from the south end of the Hoan Bridge on Milwaukee's lakefront.

The program will include a special recognition of Frank Zeidler, who died last July at age 93. Zeidler, Milwaukee's mayor from 1948 to 1960, had been a regular participant in the commemoration event which has been held annually since 1986; he was regular speaker, making one of his last public appear-



Historian John Gurda

ances at the 2006 event last May 7. From the start, Zeidler was part of the planning committee.

Milwaukee historian John Gurda will be main speaker and will reflect upon Zeidler's views on the significance of the 1886 event.

Also speaking will be Stephen Hauser, author, historian and friend of the Zeidler family. Folksinger Larry Penn will offer labor songs. Leading the ceremony will be Sheila Cochran, chief operating officer and secretary-treasurer of the Milwaukee County Labor Council.

The annual event is sponsored by the Wisconsin Labor History Society, info@wiscosinlaborhistory.org or call 414-449-4767, extension 124.

Surprising bold push by AFL-CIO puts universal health care out front

By Mark Gruenberg, Special to Labor Press

Armed with universal denunciation of the failing, creaky, expensive present employer-based insurance-company-run health care system, the AFL-CIO Executive Council unanimously voted March 6 to campaign for a massive change: Expanding Medicare to the entire country.

Union leaders ranging from AFSCME President Gerald McEntee to Steel Workers President Leo Gerard to leaders of building trades unions -- even those with multi-employer health care plans jointly run by unions and management -- blasted the present setup. "We're getting killed by this stuff," one said.

The vote puts the federation on record with a universal health care plan that would involve payments from individuals, government and business, with government running it to cut administrative costs and bargain prices, just as it now runs Medicare.

It also marks a notable break from the past, as unions helped construct the present system, but watched it become increasingly and overly expensive for workers and companies--even while 47 million people are uninsured and millions more are underinsured.

Companies have dropped health care for workers and retirees, and health care is the No. 1 battle in bargaining.

And the AFL-CIO's statement marks a new factor in the national debate about health care, as the nation's leading labor federation has now weighed in with a specific proposal, insisting that health care cover all, and rejecting the present system.

"The time for talking about this crisis is past," the federation said. "All families deserve the security of a universal health care system that guarantees access based on need rather than income. Health care is a fundamental human right and an important measure of social justice."

The statement laid down principles of universal coverage, that "government, as the voice of all of us, must play the central role in regulating, financing and providing health care," that coverage "should be

accessible through the largest possible groups to ensure coverage" for all, and that everyone -- including employers -- must share responsibility for health care financing.

It then said that "one concrete plan that meets the test of comprehensive, universal health coverage would build on our nation's successful universal health coverage plan for seniors: Medicare."

"We tried to look for fundamental principles for cost-efficient, high-quality universal coverage, taking the load off employers, while we can create the largest pool" of clients "and have government play the lead role," said Gerard, chair of the federation's Legislation Committee.

"This is a roadmap to universal coverage, and I'm not interested in having Wal-Mart sell insurance so that people can go to a Kaiser Permanente clinic in the store," he added.

After lauding Medicare, which has the federal government provide universal coverage, paid for through payroll taxes, and with seniors having a choice of doctors, the AFL-CIO adds expanding it to all "would require updating and expanding Medicare benefits to fit the working population and children, as well as negotiating prices with physicians and providers that families and the country can afford."

While the leaders did not endorse any specific bill to change the nation's health care system, AFL-CIO health care policy specialist Gerald Shea said several fit the proposal.

They include the single-payer government-run health care system bill (HR 676) by Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) and Medicare-for-all bills crafted by various legislators.

At least four unions, including USW, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union and the Plumbers and Pipefitters, back HR 676. Some 220 other union groups, with the latest being the Wisconsin AFL-CIO, also back Conyers' bill.

Employers in the aerospace, telecommunications, steel and paper industries have talked to their unions about backing the Medicare-for-all concept, but nothing has been put in writing.

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Joking aside, Miller women file discrimination cases

We've all had a lot of fun — unions, reporters, comics, bloggers — with Miller and whether their South African Breweries leaders either don't get the American corporate ethic, or maybe understand it too well.

But the "Mans Laws" brew walked right in to the derision. To take your clerical corporate workforce, mostly women, many mothers and grandmothers, average age 53, and a good portion within sight of retirement, and try to freeze their pensions in your contract offer, well, it was throwback and definitely not a highlife moment.

Particularly when you've never even raised the idea of a freeze with the other, often larger, certainly male dominated and younger unions the company employs. In fact, their pension deals work out to a third or even double better.

The 122 employees from OPEIU Local 35 seized the injustice and added — fortunately for everyone except the Miller board — a touch of humor, including YouTube videos and rallies with clever signs and inflated "Miller girls."

Underneath they were outraged. Still, they kept their heads not just in the protest promotion but in the bargaining game. They worked with the International Association of Machinists' international pension overseers to



Media had a lot of questions March 8 at the City Hall Rotunda as OPEIU Local 35's business manager, Judy Burnick, with MCLC's Sheila Cochran (left) among the participants, announced the equal rights complaints and spoke of other actions against Miller Brewery in the contract impasse.

offer a solution — letting the OPEIU workers join with the IAM in a multi-union fund that has a good track record.

Then Miller angered Local 35 further, business manager Judy Burnick recalls, by saying the company doesn't work with multi-union funds, though in fact it does in many US plants. To the local it was another indication that Miller expected this older workforce to just buckle.

But this issue does more than tickle the funnybone. It also smacks of a cruel and discriminatory tactic that jeopardizes the earned expectations of veterans who on average have been with the company for more

than 20 years.

It was the serious side of all this that drew even further media attention March 8. Timed to International Women's Day, Local 35 filed age and gender discrimination complaints against the company with both the state and federal equal rights agencies.

A host of media outlets responded with cameras, microphones and notebooks as the local outlined its action at City Hall's Rotunda, flanked by rep-

resentatives of 9to5, the National Association of Women and the Milwaukee County Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

Rep. Gwen Moore sent a representative and also issued a lament, as a longtime champion of Miller Brewery, to see its reputation of "strong corporate responsibility" tarnished.

She was echoed by Sheila D. Cochran, MCLC secretary-treasurer, who reminded the TV cameras of how strongly the union movement has talked up

the company in the past.

Gov. Barbara Lawton added her concern "that the specter of these complaints — that women doing work traditionally done by women will categorically receive inferior compensation — colors how our state is perceived."

The local's attorney, Sandra Radke, explained how seriously the complaints are filed and will be seriously investigated, though the pace of the agencies will likely mean months before a resolution.

In the meantime the embarrassment of the company behavior, the continuing rallies with a humorous twist and the potential consequences linger — unless the company returns to the table.

Currently, Local 35 is working without a contract and without union protection.

While the local has authorized a strike it is not considering one, Burnick said, but she did not rule out a boycott. A lot of women have responded in sympathy.

And Cochran pointed out that the "men of Miller" unions were standing shoulder to shoulder with Local 35.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

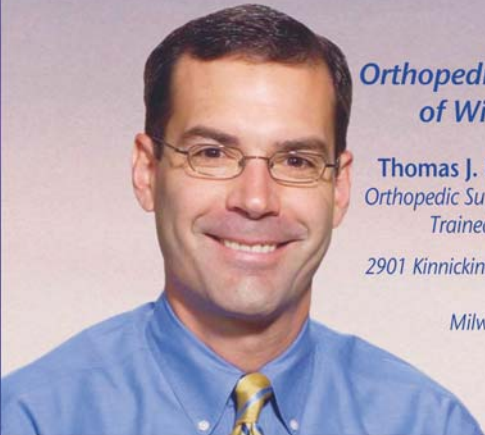


Congresswoman Gwen Moore meets with the "Miller women."

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Locked out at work, but not yet in Congress

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

“It’s not just that the playing field is tilted. Unions are locked out of the stadium.”

That accurate zinger from labor expert Harley Shaiken writing in the Los Angeles Times anticipated a momentous victory in the US House March 1 when 13 Republicans joined the Democrats to pass, 241-185, the Employee Free Choice Act, allowing majority choice in a workplace to form a union.

The AFL-CIO and Change to Win hailed this as a landmark return to the original intentions of labor laws and an overdue positive response from a newly Democratic Congress.

Also feeling hope for the first time in decades were the 58% of American workers who have told pollsters they would join a union in a minute — if it took a minute and if businesses didn’t make it so tough and dangerous.

EFCA, as the bill is known, immediately drew howls from corporations whose history of intimidation and animus actually forced the correction. But as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi noted during the bill’s debate, EFCA is really neither pro-union nor pro-business. It’s pro-worker, the original intention back in 1935 of the National Labor Relations Act.

Yet the bill’s passage was underplayed where not ignored by the mainstream media, which is of course concentrated in the hands of a few conglomerates.

Don’t just blame longstanding press indifference to unions and to the deterioration of worker rights (ironic at a time when

workforce development has emerged as a major national need).

The media won’t waste much ink on EFCA because it just assumes it will not become the law of the land. Besides, there’s good money in all those anti-EFCA ads funded by corporations and the US Chamber of Commerce, which has bluntly told members of Congress they will “feel the pain” if they “cross the Chamber.”

In consequence, journalists largely ignored scores of press conferences around the nation with members of Congress explaining the importance of EFCA ahead of the vote — including Rep. Gwen Moore at a Feb. 19 breakfast meeting at MCLC headquarters.

The media instead looked ahead to nose counts that suggest EFCA might barely pass the House (it actually did in a breeze) but will have a tough journey through the US Senate (a battle that occurs after our deadlines).

And even if it passes the Senate, both President Bush and Vice-President Cheney have already promised a veto of yet another bill the majority of the country supports (such as the only previous veto, funding embryonic stem cell research).

Republicans in Congress, plunging like lemmings over a cliff ahead of the 2008 elections, seem reluctant right now to help the Democrats achieve a two-thirds majority in both houses to override any potential veto. Party loyalty seems to trump working families.

But things change. As one pundit observed, “The Democrats understand now that labor is indeed their backbone.”



The media crowded in for Rep. Moore’s press conference outside the MCLC offices, but little airtime resulted. It will take a loud fight by workers to get EFCA all the way home.

AFL-CIO National President John Sweeney has already indicated that EFCA is a turning point but only one in a “growing movement to restore our nation’s middle class.” The forces of improving the lot of the American workers are intending to return again and again to stiffen Congress into responsible action.

The strength of that progressive spine is being challenged by corporate forces, which may be self-defeating. How long do they expect workers to continue in an oppressive atmosphere? After all, US worker productivity rose 20% from 2000 to 2006 while buying power has improved an anemic 2%. Families up the income scale are feeling the pinch and anger.

To oppose EFCA, corporations are now rewriting their own behavior, shrink-wrapping themselves as champions of principles rather than opponents of the right to organize. To defend the thickets of legalities and the current ease of escaping punishment for opposing unions, they accuse

unions of being opposed to the secret ballot.

What unions are opposed to is a secret election in Saddam Hussein’s basement.

Supporters of EFCA actually agree that “the secret ballot is appropriately considered sacred in a democracy,” as Shaiken says, but he add a crucial point: “It requires a democratic context to be meaningful.”

In the decade after the National Labor Relations Act was created in 1935, almost a third of all organizing took place without a “secret election,” because both companies and government recognized that if a majority wanted a union they should have one.

What corporations really don’t like is that now there would be meaningful punishment for breaking the labor laws.

Today, one worker every 17 minutes is disciplined or fired for union activity (and that’s from the National Labor Election Board’s own 2005 annual report). Even when workers win their case and back pay in court, it can take years.

The punishment is so light that companies roar ahead, with massive collusion from the current administration. The minute workers sign enough cards to lead to an NLRB election, or even when companies hear that is happening, CEOs turn immediately to union-busting law firms, threats to close the plant, closed-door harangues against the union, intimidation and harassment by managers who have the power to fire.

The “secret ballot” once protected the rights of the weak against the powers of the rich and mighty. Corporations have turned that upside down.

The current Department of Labor, supposedly mandated to protect worker rights and encourage equity in the system, clearly won’t double-cross the Chamber. Secretary Elaine Chao has come out against EFCA, proclaiming that “Voter privacy is a fundamental human right.”

Fairness is, of course, even a more basic right. Organizing is supposed to be protected by law. But joining a union had become

more a risk to your job than a right of Americans.

EFCA simply restores the original balance intended by the law but crippled by anti-worker administrators and courts. Nor does it give unions a free hand to bully a workforce, as businesses that have been the real bullies argue. EFCA imposes double-checks and real penalties for coercive tactics or delaying a first contract by either side.

While corporations complain that the new law would allow unions to pressure workers into signing cards, most analysts acknowledge it will reduce not just meddling by employers but also by unions.

“The current system forces us to expend a lot of money to organize against the company’s actions,” one Milwaukee organizer told me. “If we get to the point where workers don’t feel intimidated and can simply sign up for their preference, we can do more on worker safety, health care, old age protection and all the vital stuff that unions are supposed to be about.”

EFCA will actually reduce costs for companies, which no longer have to spend such big bucks on lawyers, or buy off anti-union workers with larger pay, or fight against first contracts or spend money on a host of other useless expenses that drive stockholders as well as managers crazy.

“The companies are just foolish — they don’t understand that having a union can be the most efficient Human Resources Department they can have,” noted Sheila Cochran, secretary-treasurer of the MCLC and a former UAW bargainer.

Arguments used against EFCA actually turn out to be arguments for it. A more mobile workforce? Well, wouldn’t it be great to get union protection wherever you go — rather than face a protracted fight each time?

Corporations sneer that all organizers want to do is increase their union dues money, “and sure we do,” said the Milwaukee organizer. “It’s a pittance compared to the thousands companies pay for lobbyists and to join professional associations that work against unionizing.”

“EFCA will allow those dues to focus on improving society and working family satisfaction and reward. Corporate America hasn’t done that, has it?”

Perhaps EFCA will fail at the White House door or the inability to rally two-thirds support in the Senate.

But if it does, that will certainly clarify just who in our society doesn’t buy into the basic American Dream — the power of united action, the recognition of mutual responsibility in social contracts, the simple chance to leave all our children a better life, which includes a union life for those who want it.

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PIC From Page 1

defiant and skeptical of the mayor's ability to lead.

"There is no dilemma on our part," said Randall in a phone interview that week with the Labor Press. "I'm dismayed at the perception we're not spending the money where it was intended. We do better than a merely credible job in providing services. We have a strong mix of programming."

He denies that the mayor's emergence has anything to do with PIC's announcement at the end of February that it was cutting off any new vendors and new training programs for adults on March 5, four months before the end of a budget year, forcing its agencies to turn away needy would-be workers at the door.

"That's just good stewardship," Randall said, though budgets were in place last June. "We are running out of funding" and can only keep core programs going, he said.

It is, of course, Randall's president, Bush, who has dwindled federal money even in the years Milwaukee suffered major manufacturing loss. Usually, state workforce experts note, it requires some cataclysmic economic event or an unanticipated plant closing to justify a freeze.

The Milwaukee situation puts a quite different pressure on PIC — a demand for new workers and new training, which makes any cutoff self-defeating and clearly a dilemma for a mayoral takeover.

The decision to freeze shocked several PIC partners. It spurred new negotiations to fight to preserve underwriting in training programs pushed to meet construction needs by the Milwaukee Building & Construction Trades Council.

It put in a limbo few will talk about — because the public response was so positive — the quarter of a million dollars PIC had committed to underwrite heavy-plate welding training by MATC for 100 potential workers at Bucyrus International. It meant the HIRE Center had to tell employers it could not reimburse for on the job training.

All this led HIRE employees to plead in letters and in person to the mayor to investigate mismanagement at PIC and step in even earlier than July to protect the dislocated workers of the community.

"Yes, we are mystified by the freeze," said one City Hall official. "And the current private-public partnership system, without an outside audit, leaves us unclear about why it happened."

But now the city, the state and the media are digging for answers. PIC's stoppage has refocused the lasers on its own operation.

Labor Press research and interviews with dozens of PIC employees, partners and board members, former and current, pinpoint lingering concerns. Among them:

- **Partners who don't feel a true partnership.** They want the federal money that flows through PIC, but except for simpler functions like placing a career specialist at the youth center, they feel budget and policy decisions are a one-way street — Randall's street.

- **"Forced to just trust" that the grant money is being used wisely and efficiently.** "The rules and regulations are so complex that you have to rely on the top managers, even when you are surprised by the choice of hires, vendors and the like," said one PIC partner. "So you go along, until things blow up."

- **Misplaced credit.** Since PIC's name is on every program with large and small entities — MPS, MATC, UWM, WRTP (Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership) — the public never knows where PIC provided enterprise or simply sent the required money. In either event, those interviewed say, PIC gets an administrative fee and usually a spot at the speakers table.

Recalls a veteran manager at PIC, "Randall today takes credit for partnerships that, in my experience, he had to be dragged into."

- **Failure to add sizable funding from employers and foundations, along with government.** "Foundations and employers are reluctant to turn over control given PIC's management," conceded one workforce specialist.

Others say the mayor will push the new setup to generate funding from employers and foundations. Barrett is also a former Congressman keenly aware that the changes in D.C. could lead to more federal workforce money flowing to the states.

Very few of those interviewed about PIC problems believe that the Randall style is a sign of corruption.

"This is not a case like OIC," said one. "I think Randall is sincere, and this whole veil of secrecy, not sharing the budgets or inviting outsiders in and hiding in the thickets of complicated legislation — that's just the



HIRE case worker Pat Elizondo urges the mayor at the delegate meeting to move on PIC's "mismanagement."

way he likes to operate."

"But it's an invitation to corruption," said another expert, saying that an air of mystery and arrogance is "what prevents clean accountability in public-private partnerships."

Ministers, too, have complained to officials that the PIC flipped policies on funding youth coordinators for faith-based job initiatives. The ministers know their communities and who would best motivate youth, but they've complained that Randall insisted on choosing the hires.

Though the mayor is expanding the summer jobs program to cover 1,500 young people in 2007, Randall argues that he would do it better. "Our youth programs are some of the most innovative and, I believe, some of the most effective in the country," said Randall.

Yet the community can fairly ask just what it got for the \$23.7 million in a five-year youth opportunity grant from 2000 to 2005 that the DOL flowed directly to PIC. The program was a wraparound not just a job effort, envisioning the same kids staying but stepping up over many years.

It was one of 36 national sites addressing high poverty areas and at-risk 14-21 year-old youths in urban and rural settings and on Indian reservations. A range of services were designed to keep youth in school, get them back, help families of the incarcerated, subsidize wages, support GED candidates with tuition and so forth.

But open records request to the DOL returned figures that suggest Milwaukee did not exactly knock the ball out of the park in most of the common grant areas.

Both workforce and poverty experts say there are dangers in applying a means test with the 35 other sites, yet they were troubled that such a straight-up comparison shows Milwaukee doing half as well as the other sites in finding long-term jobs and advanced education.

In the five years of the grant only 336 youth were listed as finding long-term unsubsidized jobs (jobs in which PIC wasn't paying a large portion of their wages) and only 398 were in college or long-term vocational training.

The experts put it another way — if all the money was spent in the five years, it wound up costing nearly \$31,000 per youth actually moved out of the muck of poverty through advanced education and long-term jobs.

But REACH was about much more than that, so you fairly have to look at all the ways young people were lifted up. The price-tag test indicates that for each of the 1,828 youngsters who just walked through the door of the REACH Institute, the taxpayers spent \$13,000.

Randall has also been defending the travel figures reported to the IRS — \$825,000 in 2002 for all its programs and more than half a million a year afterward. Granted some required training of staff at far-flung conferences, he said, "90% of the travel is client-related."

Since veterans of the adult program and the dislocated worker program can record only a few thousand dollars a year for those activities, most of this travel expenditure seemed about young people. Former PIC employees describe not only bus chits and car trips but vendors providing vans for special excursions.

Even critics of Randall's management — those who regard him mainly as a spokesman and say his executive vice president, David Wilson, really runs the show — "can't question his passion to do something for inner city young people and education," said one former board member of PIC, echoing the views of several others. "I think he's sincere in his stubbornness. And at-risk youth is a tough, tough area to make inroads."

But measuring dollars versus outcomes has raised deep questions.

Some pundits have argued that PIC is a small player — currently a \$16 million budget — in a broad field of concerns. But actually the figures and forms analyzed reveal it has handled quite a multiple-year pot:

- More than \$12 million in Welfare to Work money (one grant a cooperative venture with W-2 agencies that those partners didn't much like; the other was part of the formula allocation for administration services).
- Federal grants from HUD and a half million dollars per year JobRide program to link clients to worksites.
- From 2002 to 2006, the DOL sent Milwaukee \$60 million monitored by the state for youth, adults and dislocated workers. The successful HIRE Center handled 45% of that money with good results (see related story), but there is a consensus that the adult programs don't work together and none amounts to the One-Stop Job Center the plans advertised.

- Then there's that direct \$23.7 million youth opportunity grant and its REACH Institute program that has badly faded once the money ran out in 2005.

Randall points to PIC's range of activities, though several are required by the feds — underwriting training, subsidizing wages, placing career specialists in 16 MPS high schools, helping prep students for college entrance exams, supporting multiple job centers, seeking to bring former inmates into productive education and work.

"He (the mayor) talks about duplication in services," said Randall, "but how is his adding a new layer not adding to the duplication?"

"I expect the mayor to knock down the silos and the barriers," said a City Hall official.

"All Randall's doing in his interviews is making it clear to the mayor that he will have to dump the existing confusion," said a county official. "Right now the system is so hard to figure out — and I do think reduplicative — that it seems more about empire building than services."

The growing concerns have led to the departure from the PIC board of union officials. They have now been joined by several business leaders. By mandate, the board appointed by the county exec must have 51% representation from employers — and it also must be large (three dozen) to reflect the movers and shakers in the community, some of whom run programs that receive PIC money.

But large showcase boards have backfired. Randall himself saw the consequences of a rubber-stamp herd at the Milwaukee Public Museum, which was eaten alive by the behavior of its executives.

"But I think he wants it that way," said one county official. "The CEO has a lot more freedom from oversight, and the board doesn't know what's really going on."

Randall remains on the museum board, but this February he lost the role of UW regent to which he was appointed by Tommy Thompson and reappointed by Scott McCallum. Milwaukee Democratic leaders were no longer willing to fight for him as a representative of diversity and inner city priorities. It was that reputation in 2003 that allowed him to defy tradition and refuse to step aside when a new governor, Doyle, submitted a bipartisan slate.

But support has now vaporized in both parties. In February the state Senate, 32-1, backed replacing him with Milwaukee banker Michael Falbo.

"If there was ever a time for Randall to make nice and objectively re-evaluate PIC's role, this is it," said a former champion. "I think his actions suggest he has lost sight of the political realities that once helped him."

One official who has served under three governors was blunter, while insisting on anonymity: "The days are long past when you sought for leaders of public programs from a narrow band of Republicans who are African Americans. So yes, there are some politics involved. But in workforce development, after all these years and with the growing problems, you have to focus on results, not party ideology."

That brings us back to "InterCHANGE" when Randall acknowledged that he couldn't disagree with the major social goals in Doyle's budget but slammed the governor's "mismanagement," asking why the public should support "ambitious programs under this administration's watch that they don't know how to run — will they be effectively able to deliver the quality?"

You could almost hear the jaws of officialdom dropping because that was precisely the time frame when Randall's management was coming under hard scrutiny.

In our interview, Randall was adamant that his PIC "will remain an important part of workforce development and we're not going to stop doing the things we are doing that work."

Now the mayor's office is determined to find out just what those are.

HIRE

From Page 1

generates 45% of the PIC federal funding that is monitored by the state, combining formula allocations and special circumstances grants (such as the closing of the 440th Airlift Wing).

That's more than the adult worker program and today more than the youth programs that once led the PIC funding parade (see story opposite page). That youth money was drying up when PIC bought the 27th & North building in 2004.

HIRE (Help In Re-Employment) is up one flight on a slow elevator. It is a beehive inside a bulky MATC building (with PIC's federal funds paying the technical college about \$75,000 a year in rent).

The factory-like offices and meeting rooms are old but spotless. The parking is under a freeway, but the lot was full and the HIRE floor was bustling. Visitors were warmly greeted. Displaced workers had no money for sitters, so they brought their children even on the coldest days.

All are welcomed with sympathy. Case workers took the needy adults to an intake room for interviews or to office cubicles that allowed a sense of privacy.

"The HIRE model? We've got a gem here," said Ron Danowski, section chief in Madison of the state's dislocated worker program in the Department of Workforce Development.

He is responsible for monitoring and processing federal dollars allocated to 11 workforce development boards in the state — much of it by formula, some of it in emergency grants.

The applications for funds written by the HIRE staff go from PIC to the state and then on to the US Department of Labor. Once approved, the money flows to the state and back to PIC — some \$12.67 million in emergency dislocation grants over the last several years.

"Most people don't know HIRE's come up with innovative stuff that is a national model," said Danowski. "Such as its Spanish track. I'm still amused by a call from Texas, a place you'd think would know about bilingual training, but they asked us to explain how we were doing this so well here in the Midwest. And that was HIRE."

HIRE is actually a collaborative consortium combining oversight and support by the Milwaukee Area Technical College, the AFL-CIO Labor Education and Training Center (LETC), the Milwaukee County Labor Council, United Way and the Wisconsin Job Service, all of whom contribute services and ideas to make HIRE a rapid response center. Dislocated worker funding by the feds began in 1983, Danowski recalls.

Within HIRE is a busy but calm zone known as the Learning Lab — "really the heart of our operation," said Alba Baltodano,



director of the HIRE, who radiates friendliness and concern about details.

She moved over from other PIC duties in January 2006 and quickly emerged as a soft-spoken bulldog in battling for her clients, staff and resources.

Baltodano doesn't say much about this, but outsiders who champion her confirm that her main battles have been getting recognition and resources from her bosses over at 27th & North where PIC has its offices.

Those bosses are CEO Gerard A. Randall Jr. and his executive vice-president, David Wilson, whom Scott Walker briefly hired away in 2005 when the county executive was seriously running for governor.

However these executives treat the HIRE, it can fairly be said that PIC has been good for their own re-employment.

From 1998 to 2004 as CEO, former schoolteacher and county aide Randall saw his base salary rise 67%, according to payroll and IRS documents — \$98,000 to \$159,099, and it's gone up since, say members of PIC's large board, which signs off on budget and salary. That's without additions, and it's now close to what Superintendent William Andrekopoulos gets to run the \$1 billion MPS.

Even as federal money for PIC plummeted by a third, Wilson's salary also rose notably and it climbed to the currently listed \$137,000, board members recall, when Randall argued that "Wilson left a better paying job" to return.

(That was in 2005 when Wilson left PIC briefly to work for the county executive, whose desire to merge public works and parks under Wilson was clearly doomed from the start. Still, Wilson, at a rate of \$58 an hour, hung around the county for four months — and \$41,000 — before returning to PIC.)

Layoffs at PIC when funding shrunk, analysis suggests, hit mostly people at the bottom of the payroll pile. The last available IRS document listed a growth in staff making \$50,000 to \$103,000 a year.

The noble goal of finding at-risk youth and returning them to education and workforce training is one dilemma the community has not yet solved and it led to many PIC layoffs.

But HIRE has a track record of success. One key may be rapport.

The stretched HIRE staff of 21, some years handling 2,600 dislocated workers, contains many employees once dislocated themselves. They have gained expertise through training and years of service. But they also

At the frequently dormant 27th & North building, Private Industry Council signage (left) marks nearly every project. On National Ave., things may look scruffier, but the job center alone at HIRE handles 4,600 users a year.



understand depression and fear — and the value of not giving in.

The 14 LETC specialists come from Lodge 66 of the IAM (machinists). The four job service workers are AFSCME. The part-time teacher and the full-time teacher are AFT Local 212.

Some dislocated workers need remedial education or language skills to qualify for new jobs. Others are unaware of the skills developed in their worklife. All that requires individualized service, which is time-consuming and requires insight. Preparing them also requires psychological gifts, since workers suffer disillusion when a veteran company closes on them.

But the dislocated have a track record of a work ethic — which is far different than youth training.

So it may not be totally fair — though it certainly touches on the issue of resources — to point out that, during the five years of federal funding for REACH and its 1,828 young people, HIRE fully processed eight times the number of clients with a smaller staff. And while REACH can only record a few hundred jobs, HIRE in that time frame found long-term employment for 78% of its clients.

Even more remarkable, their replacement wages averaged 89% of what they had earned before.

These are results that should be celebrated, not undermined.

PIC's attitude toward HIRE, and what many have called its cavalier cutting off of funds and denial of requests, has caused dissonance and anxiety within the consortium.

"HIRE makes PIC's numbers look good. It needs resources, not interference," said one former PIC manager, who believes that it's high time for regime change, in this case a takeover by the mayor.

The former director, Roger Hinkle, remains at HIRE as a case manager, openly delighted with Baltodano's success. (Friends say he quit the director role partly because of endless bureaucratic battles with Randall and Wilson.)

On one recent day Labor

Press visited, management-labor committees had just departed — more than 200 employers are active partners with HIRE — and the Learning Lab was helping workers from Red Star Yeast, St. Michael's Hospital, a nursing home and a parts manufacturer. They ranged in age from 35 to 62.

All received personalized intervention in the Learning Lab. Baltodano is adamant that PIC must fund it properly and is fighting for just one more teacher.

Down the hall from the lab and its 15 computers is an open resources center staffed only by a part-timer.

It separately draws 4,600 visitors a year. It is one of Milwaukee's most active job centers, where visitors can search databases and the Internet on 11 computers to pursue jobs, pick from an extensive library of videos that detail careers, and can even write or update their resumes.

"Just look at the number of people who have gone through the HIRE Center," said Danowski. "The vast majority have gotten jobs and jobs that are sticking" — since both the state and HIRE emphasize long-term follow-up.

"Thousands of people back in jobs, people kept off welfare rolls or from sliding into poverty," said Danowski. "Millions of federal dollars coming into Milwaukee. Its effectiveness is obvious."

"I think PIC leadership has treated HIRE badly, like an orphan," said a former member of the PIC board. "I believe some of that is antagonism to unions."

Some issues sound enormous, such as a threat to cut \$1 million from HIRE's 2007 budget. Others sound trivial but aren't. HIRE has produced detailed plans for Internet interaction not just for dislocated workers but for adults. Yet all three of the IT specialists listed on PIC's organizational chart are based at 27th & North — though HIRE has four times as many computer stations and 10 times the traffic.

"You can't play games with what you pledged," said one for-

mer PIC insider. "If you don't use the money, you lose it next year under the formula. I think that's been happening."

State managers cite the same concern and say failure to use the money affects the formula allocation of workforce boards throughout the state.

Over at 27th & North, Randall takes credit — and some public officials agree — for starting a development ball rolling. PIC's center has a store complex directly to the east. Another shopping center is planned just east of that on North Avenue — and moving further east the city is committing millions in development.

But PIC carries a nearly \$3 million mortgage on the building under an LLC (limited liability company). In loan guarantees and leases, the state, county and city taxpayers are on the hook for \$3.25 million — \$1 million in a county mortgage guarantee, \$750,000 in a similar state guarantee that county officials say they didn't know was happening, and \$1.5 million committed by the MPS for a 10-year lease ending in 2014.

That creates entanglements in any discussion of PIC's continuing role in workforce development, particularly as federal funding for youth development collapses.

"The federal government is not happy to see (unpaid mortgages) in the entities it flows dollars through," noted one federal employee. "That's built-in peril."

"This is an albatross for the county that the city will now have to help solve," said one official.

Perhaps it was Randall's needs as a landlord that underlay his frequent efforts to close the HIRE Center on National Avenue and move its entire operation to 27th & North. Not only the Latino community yelled in anguish. So did HIRE staff and most of the consortium. So did elected officials, who finally got him to desist.

"He wanted to rob Peter to protect Paul," laughs one county official.



Down the hall from the HIRE intake center, director Alba Baltodano uses her office as a nerve center and occasional getaway.

Ziegler keeps gutting herself

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

Annette Ziegler started her campaign as a unintentional Christmas gift for bloggers. Her website, determined to demonstrate she was a judge for all people, Photoshopped her image in front of every justice center in every Wisconsin county. That way she didn't have to hit the road to seem involved (which proved something of an omen).

Internet eyes quickly picked up on the impositions and the pretension. A legion of delighted bloggers grabbed the images before they disappeared and started a hilarious Photoshop contest of their own — putting Ziegler on a lunar base, as one of the Flintstones, on the US Supreme Court (nine robed images of No No Annette), in Baghdad, at the Superdome during Hurricane Katrina and even in “The Last Supper.”

That was funny — and an accidental boon to her credentialed and truly intelligent opponent, Linda Clifford, a Madison attorney.

But now Ziegler's Internet embarrassment has morphed without Photoshop help into judicial scandal. The bloggers have been replaced by investiga-

tive reporters.

Clifford continues to try to focus forums on actual competence, while reporters pursue serial impropriety on the bench. Ziegler tries to dismiss the charges and turns them worse, falling into the sort of defense that makes strict constructionists blanch — and they were supposed to be her base.

Labor Press, with a bit of accurate steering from One Wisconsin Now, did its records check early in the race. Our story at milwaukeeelabor.org came out a week before the Madison and Milwaukee newspapers chimed in.

But there's no way to keep up with the legions at these newspapers, and boy, have they been busy. Their revelations show — there is no other way to put it — a startling indifference to judicial ethics and required codes of conduct on Ziegler's part.

The revelations make her not only the wrong choice for the Wisconsin Supreme Court but also a growingly desperate one. Since one of the high court's highest obligations is to be the probe and judge of other judges' conduct, it's becoming clear that only by winning can Ziegler escape investigation.

Our web story started with

her failure, until public pressure, to recuse herself from a case involving Wal-Mart, in which she has more than \$100,000 in investments. What sort of judge wouldn't know in a flash to duck out of that one?

But the investigation moved on to her accepting 46 cases where she ruled most often for West Bend Savings Bank, where her husband is a paid member of the board and where, it turns out, she has \$3 million in loans.

We took a tour of her \$2.7 million portfolio, of the stories back to 1999 of her curious sentencing policies, hardly reflecting those “law and order” hypes in her ads.

But apparently we only scratched the surface.

News reports now list dozens of cases involving companies in which she has sizeable stock yet in none of those cases did she inform lawyers from both sides or recuse herself, as required under the judicial code.

Her defense is that she relied on a “gut check” of whether there was a conflict. Apparently her gut never regurgitated when her own portfolio of holdings was involved, and that includes oil companies, health providers, financial institutions (but not

While Clifford focuses on ability, ethics

stock in Photoshop).

Milwaukee magazine just did a major expose of judges in this county who had far milder holdings and conflicts they should probably have mentioned. The reporter should look at Washington County. Maybe Ziegler has non-Photoshop clones.

Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce and a secretive right-wing group, Club for Growth, poured hundreds of thousands of dollars into issue ads in this campaign, mainly touting Ziegler's record as a judge and encouraging voters to check that out.

They can't get the money back. Voters ARE looking, and it isn't pretty. The ads also pointed the media at precisely the behavior where she is most vulnerable.

Cynics would say WMC and Club for Growth got the cosmetic inanity of a candidate they deserved.

Lost in all the uproar, unfortunately, is that the candidates offer a notable contrast not just in propriety but in resumes.

Clifford worked summers as a steelworker to earn a degree from Beloit College, moved on to UW-Madison, worked as a lawyer for the attorney general's office, took a break to raise her family and then, by all accounts, became an effective lead attorney and law partner in many of the specialties the Supreme Court will have to deal with.

Ziegler travels in the WMC's sort of circles. Not much empathy for the little guy who's having his car repossessed or his loan forfeited. Plenty of empathy for the bankers.

Ziegler married into one of Wisconsin's most prominent and wealthy Republican families.

That guaranteed her a strong war-chest. Like Clifford, she put her own money into the campaign. But whenever Ziegler did, a gaggle of obedient Zieglers followed — usually in the same month (June of 2006, Annette put in \$50,000, four Zieglers simultaneously put in \$9,250. December, 2006: Annette \$75,000, others in the clan \$45,000).

That state judicial code is probably not strong enough. (But seriously



Linda Clifford

now, which candidate do you think would work to strengthen it?) It assumes judges think about the moral nuances of the law.

But still, the code is pretty clear: Reveal conflicts of interest as soon as discovered; withdraw in case of a conflict where you or family members are “an officer, director or trustee”; stay informed about family financial interests, and manage your investments so as to minimize the number of cases requiring recusal or disqualification.

The last one is particularly interesting. In 1997, when Gov. Tommy Thompson appointed Ziegler to the bench (with contributions from Ziegler's bracketing that event), Ziegler reported investments in 39 companies, 16 of them at a level of \$50,000 or more.

The Wisconsin State Journal looked at her most recent statement of economic interest and found holdings of between \$5,000 and \$50,000 in 174 companies, including 29 at a level of \$50,000 or more. So much for minimizing.

Clifford was an active Democrat before this race, but she knows what it means to be an officer of the court. Friends describe her as effective, principled, scrupulous of the law and soft-spoken.

Right now, with all the media yelling, she can step back and save her cash for the last two weeks and then hope the public is ready to hear about her character and philosophy.

The contrast alone should be wonderful.



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Real change depends on April 3 vote, delegates told

Spring elections, particularly those where mainly judicial and school board contests fill the ballot, are notorious for low turnout. They also contain the disturbing possibility that a fringe group - or a well-heeled candidate who can afford to mail a color promotion to every household - can run off with an office.

COPE (Committee on Political Education for the labor council) held off most of its fire for the February primary even while interviewing 90% of the candidates. But it has recommended a full slate for the April 3 election. All were unanimously accepted at the March delegate meeting.

Now the pressure mounts on union members to get involved.

The judicial contests are topped by a statewide race in which a lot of money is being spent - and the way money has flowed to the Republican candidate (in a supposedly nonpartisan election), Annette Ziegler, has itself become an issue. For more on why **Linda Clifford** is the obvious choice, see opposite page.

COPE had previously endorsed **Bill Pocan**, the incumbent in Branch 26 of the Milwaukee County Circuit Court, over an assistant district attorney, **Chris Liegel**.

In the Feb. 20 primary, a half dozen talented attorneys were whittled down to two. COPE made a strong recommendation for **Phil Chavez** over Jennifer Havas for city municipal judge, Branch 3, replacing the retiring Jim Gramling.

Chavez has previous experience as a judge, has expressed a strong balanced philosophy and a rounded understanding of this busy judicial role. He has also proven a hard campaigner.

In every contested race for



Bill Pocan, hoping to remain Milwaukee County Circuit Court Judge April 3, thanks a diverse crowd of supporters at his Italian Community Center fundraiser March 8. In the background is Antonio Riley, who introduced Pocan on behalf of Gov. Doyle, who was recuperating from hip surgery.

Milwaukee school board, COPE made a strong choice. MCLC Vice-President Annie Wacker, also a member of COPE and herself a former school board candidate, offered the council's delegates some important points in pushing the slate.

For the first time in years, voters have a choice of -- not a narrow majority and continued conflict -- a community school board committed to communication with the public and teamwork to return the MPS to a focus on children, education, strong teachers and a less cumbersome bureaucracy.

Reminding delegates that strong cooperative leadership decades ago made the MPS the sort of school system that other communities "actually sent their leaders here to see how it should be done," Wacker urged a return to those days of creative education, of ways to measures accountability that are not married to privatization and hidden

school board member who has far more money in the contest, **Bruce Thompson**.

But Thompson, defeated by current incumbent Jennifer Morales, represents failed policies and has used his greater campaign contributions to tout those same failed policies again and offer some vague promises to hold everyone else accountable.

Brown-Grice believes in real communication, give and take and response to parents along with uniform advances for the children. Once an MPS parent (her son is now in college), she has displayed a vibrant personality and common sense on the campaign trail. And she is nobody's pawn.

Still, with less name recognition and far less money, she will need labor's help and more volunteers to win, COPE members pointed out after their decision.

District 2 - COPE again supports the underdog. Veteran community activist - and retired Smith Steelworker - **Wendell Harris Sr.** was chosen over incumbent Jeff Spence. Both were interviewed

March 7 before the delegate meeting.

District 3 - In a seat left open by the decision of Ken Johnson not to run, the two survivors of the primary are new to the campaign trail. COPE was more impressed by an activist in Democratic Party circles, **Stephanie Findley**, over Michael Bonds.

District 8 - Retired MPS teacher **Terrance Falk**, who topped a three-way primary contest, was COPE's clear choice over incumbent Joe Dannecker.

District 1 - Only one candidate successfully filed nomination papers for the seat vacated by Barbara Horton. He is Tim Petersons, an MPS parent who has indicated he is taking a wait and see attitude on how he aligns on the board.

COPE's choices - Brown-Grice, Harris, Findley and Falk - are generally expected to align with COPE's previous victories on the school board: Morales, Peter Blewett and Charlene Hardin, who have proven better listeners and analysts of the needs of MPS. -- D.P.N.

political agendas.

That requires replacing the two incumbents who remain in the race and filling the vacant seats with people who represent both common sense and their grassroots communities.

The opportunity for change may not seem as large as it did last November, Wacker suggested, but it's actually there. "So I'm not just asking you to vote April 3," said Wacker. "I'm begging you."

Here are COPE's clear school board choices.

The vacant at-large seat (everyone in the city can vote): **Bama Brown-Grice** is the run-away choice over a former

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