

Price of victory? It's listen up, Obama!

By Dominique Paul Noth, Editor, Milwaukee Labor Press

There were contrary feelings but determined action -- dominated by organized labor and progressive coalitions -- immediately in the wake of November 6. They were spurred by a clear recognition that the election had validated much of their agenda, if not all their methods, in the re-election of Barack Obama as president, the surprising majority gains of Democratic allies in the Senate and even the improvements in the House where the GOP retain a weakened control.

"Though the election confetti is still on the street, working families are already mobilizing to hold their elected leaders accountable," noted AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka November 7. "With working families across the country still struggling, we can't afford to pay for any more tax breaks for those who need them the least."

That was the most prominent prong of the immediate reaction - a cry from thousands of activists to tax the top 2%, which means simply to revert to their Clinton era rates and return billions in revenue to the federal coffers.

Among those mobilizations -- more than 100 around the country and in D.C. - was a big one covered by TV media crowded into the hallway outside newly re-elected US Rep. Gwen Moore's office the morning of November 9, organized by the machinists and steelworkers, attended by Citizen Action and other groups and featuring state AFL-CIO President Phil Neuenfeldt and one of the national AFL-CIO's three top leaders, Executive Vice-President Arlene Holt Baker, who had been in Wisconsin all week and

Showdown continued Page 8



Newly elected Sen. Tammy Baldwin was virtually mobbed with congratulations Nov. 9 by Washington Park Senior Center supporters who were simultaneously demanding that President Obama protect Social Security and Medicare while taxing the top 2%.

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White guys can't jump voting lines again

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

Comment

Comparisons to the raw emotion Barack Obama drew in 2008 are somewhat misleading because even a married couple renewing vows after four years doesn't flash the same passion as the first time around but ideally maintain a deeper, mature, quieter commitment. Time changes things.

So let me point out that, in the 2012 election, after 30 years - finally! -- the march of inevitable demographics and society's own dynamic reconstructions sounded the death knell for the Reagan myth, the fantasy of a "Reagan Democrat" that the Republicans still imagine over and over as racing to their rescue and especially the embrace of white Southern roots as a path to electoral dominance.

I speak about my own breed, older white males. Politically and realistically (realism never having dominated right-wing think tanks) that's a rather mixed bag of guys rightly tired of being stereotyped by these politicians. But stereotyping has been the GOP strategy, a blunt appeal to white America's worst and most jaded side.

Most of us seem to have grown up and accepted we are

dying down. Older whites are now another minority - the one that inherited a lot of advantages and social freedom, to be sure, the one reflecting a lot of anger about affirmative action and immigrants, both situations they once benefited from. They still have the advantages in acquiring money and position but are in their death throes in terms of having the numbers to control the electorate - and they sure can't control their wives -- though certainly can be counted on for a few more decades of dominating the economic wealth and responding to fund-raising pitches.

Romney and the GOP misjudged on many fronts. Their disdain of clear opportunities to speak to women or to immigrants cost them dearly. And they grasped for a fading group of older whites, ignoring how the true varied majority in America now speaks up for and welcomes diverse opportunity, cannot be stampeded or buffaloeed by appeals to an evangelical minority's view of family and values. Such constant appeals have become the simple-minded feeble-minded approach to voters, as suspect as thinking blan-



ket statements that you are "pro-life" spares you from providing details that expose your own medical ignorance.

Never again will older whites have the numbers to even think this way, or be thought of as the GOP strategists did, though they will for several generations have the positions of

power and the money to try to impose things. The new public majority doesn't like this "behave like whites" tactic and the new media is eager to expose it, even when the establishment media owned and controlled by conservative whites resisted speaking out.

The GOP actually should

have gone back in time - but to that forgotten time when principled compromise and pragmatic belief in small government and staying out of the bedroom dominated the party, rather than those extreme eras of exaggerated prejudice falsely associated with true conservatism.

For the left there is also a new reality about moving with the times. Organized labor in its street smarts and general principles clearly still has the public's ear and will for quite a while, but it also has to reach out with new techniques and attitudes to a non-union world full of citizens that actually honor its core beliefs and want to work alongside in political terms.

Of the nine battleground states that early on were determined to decide the election - a mere 21% of the nation's voters - the Obama machine told the truth from the start and carried

Finale continued Page 4

Unions exemplary in Sandy response

Understandably, a publication called Labor Press is outraged at all the demeaning of organized labor during the recent political gridlock. But whatever your name or ideological beliefs, you, too, should be horrified at intellectual dishonesty becoming the calling card of the right wing.

Our pages would be the first to welcome an honest discussion of the dangers of bigness and concentration of power. But to blame as all those right-wing ads do the least powerful next to the poor -- the working class - and not discuss the biggest and least scrutinized centers of bigness -- the lobbyists, corporate leaders and cabals of concentrated money - as the most corrupt abusers of power is truly ridiculous.

Perhaps Hurricane Sandy will help adjust things. As horrible as its destructive path was in the lives of East Coast residents, indiscriminate of whether they were rich or poor, knocking out power in lavish condos and suburban communities as well as working class neighborhoods, the enormous storm may provide a necessary social corrective.

Its major effect on the November 6 election was the cold slap of reality. The first two years of Obama's administration is actually a litany of accomplishments not just because of a Democratic majority in the House but because of citizens in both parties who wanted to get things done - until the election of 2010 froze all cooperation. Will Sandy

Sandy continued Page 12

Ballot referendum gains passed Wisconsin by

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

Wisconsin was not a part of the \$1 billion in ad spending for nearly 150 ballot initiatives around the nation. Our local ballots were pretty free of advisory or mandatory questions while elsewhere the results supporting marriage equality, marijuana and restraints on right-wing power made big news -- largely progressive news even in states not considered unrepentantly left-wing.

There are diverse ways of looking at that. One is that Wisconsin in local terms, except for electing Tammy Baldwin, largely missed the boat on how questions can drive policy changes and voter turnout. Certainly an earlier Ohio vote turned back that governor's attack on collective bargaining, an option not available under our constitution. Imagine the results if it had been.

The other is a trust, deep in Wisconsin, that elected officials and the two or four-year process is usually the best way to effect changes, compared to states like, say, much larger California, where propositions have become more important than who is elected to the state legislature.

But the third most potent reason is that Wisconsin seems

to have learned its lesson.

It was the Republicans who tried this referendum road back in 2004 and won the battle but lost the war. Does anyone remember? They spent large money to reverse Wisconsin's progressive image and pass what a mere eight years ago was widespread distaste for gay marriages and unions outside marriage, which now seems the road for most young people in America.

The right tirelessly promoted and passed an amendment to the state constitution that still stands and reads:

"Only a marriage between one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in this state. A legal status identical or substantially similar to that of marriage for unmarried individuals shall not be valid or recognized in this state."

Today this seems as mothballed as Old Ironsides.

The mandated referendum survived political and legal decisions that might now be different - today's courts might correctly recognize that this was really asking the voters to decide two issues not one.

A similar attempt to amend the Minnesota constitution was roundly defeated Nov. 6 while three other states - Maryland, Washington State and Maine - legalized the rights of gays to



John Kerry in 2004 may explain why our state avoids referendums. The GOP tried to defeat him with one to see it backfire.

marry, bringing to one-fifth the states in line with the issue months before the Supreme Court addresses a challenge to allowing gay marriage in California.

It was not just progressives in 2004 who criticized the gay marriage attack. So did many Republicans who saw the consequences.

The intent was to drive up the conservative base and win the state for George Bush. Yet it was John Kerry who won the state. And in district after district younger voters and community groups turned out powerfully to defeat Republican candidates. This in effect delayed until 2010 the Republican takeover of the Wisconsin legislature, which was

maintained more narrowly in 2012 via redistricting and continued lack of attention down the ballot.

In fact, there is little question among political analysts that without redistricting the Democrats would have kept the state senate in 2012 and may even have taken the Assembly.

Many political observers in both parties now believe that the changing electorate could make that GOP control short-lived unless the party also changes its policies and image.

Another curious sign came in the states that legalized marijuana - mainly small amounts for personal use. While defeated in Oregon, pot use drew more voters than Obama did in Colorado and Washington State. So if there is a future in ballot initiatives it may not lie on the conservative side.

Progressive California demonstrated a belief in self-flagellation, a willingness to punish themselves for the larger good. Conservative radio will scream about this, that Californians' willingness to tax themselves for the sake of education is the end of democratic freedom, but it may actually be the beginning of a recognition of what a Republican supreme court justice once called the price we pay for quality of life and true civilization -- higher taxes for high benefits.

To address its own fiscal cliff and steep rise in tuition, Californians voted overwhelming for higher tax rates on the rich and increased sales tax for everyone, aimed at educational support, an initiative pushed by Gov. Jerry Brown to close the budget hole (even as the electorate gave him a supermajority of Democrats to work with in the legislature). Proposition 30 will raise taxes by \$6 billion annually over seven years.

With big money battling equally on both sides - some estimate \$135 million -- California forcefully supported union political rights by loudly defeating Proposition 32, which would have prevented unions from spending members' dues on political causes.

By an enormous 68% the voters changed the notorious "three strikes and you get life"

law, which used minor drug convictions for lifetime incarceration. It imposed rules that the new third felony conviction must be for a "serious or violent" offense. Yet the state voters also rejected ending the death penalty and defeated another measure that sounded so California fruity on paper.

The state's health food movement succumbed to the big money grocery and food industry when voters turned down requiring most genetically engineered food and produce sold in supermarkets and other outlets to be labeled.

In Maryland, voters endorsed a measure allowing in-state tuition at public colleges for the "Dreamers" - another clue that politicians had better pay attention to the concerns of a growing Latino community.

In major news, Michigan's hated emergency management law that allowed the governor to impose a fiscal czar was defeated. Republican Gov. Rick Snyder and his administration did tricks with everything including font size to try and keep the issue off the ballot, but the public persevered.

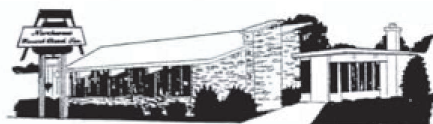
It could be that some other measures were defeated unintentionally in the Michigan voters' 52% rush to end the law, which allowed state-appointed emergency managers to renegotiate union contracts, change pension agreements and sell public assets under the excuse of addressing fiscally-troubled communities whatever local officials wanted or the citizens urged. Opponents called it the return of the Third Reich and the voters agreed.

While it could be argued that progressives won in many of these ballot questions in other states, it could also be argued that democracy won because the voters were thinking issues through - even the marijuana votes were limited. Big money influenced but didn't decide the results, as was also true in the national races. Still, money may have tilted the playing field in terms of coverage, so no one can say money doesn't have an impact. It will again.

The stated \$4 billion spent on all these contests (president, Congress, local and referendums) certainly if temporarily provided economic stimulus, though hardly as precisely as government stimulus.

It kept the nation's TV and radio stations afloat for several months with heady profits. These anchors may tsk-tsk about how much money was wasted, but it was wasted on them and now their hypocrisy is showing. Where will their profits go when this money evaporates?

Big business people not only bet wrong but have the bucks to gamble on the wrong side gigantically again and again. So much for fiscal astuteness if we put them in charge of our money.



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Death of the Wyndham

The location was unbeatable for convention events and visiting travelers - right across Howell Avenue from Mitchell Airport. The hotel rooms were a little faded but the lobby spacious and the restaurant, four-star as Harold's and still attractive when switched to casual dining, was respected.

The chief attraction aside from easy parking in an area full of hotels, similar but smaller hotels eager to accommodate corporate training visitors flown in by corporations, was the huge banquet and exhibit hall. Within this elaborate space and meeting rooms, various meetings and large luncheons and dinners were often served.

Whatever the name -- once the Grand Milwaukee, then the Four Points and lately the Wyndham brand -- a great number of unions and union friendly groups had become regular guests because of location and the unionized workforce. The prices were also an attraction.

The power luncheon organizers of the Association of Retired Americans, honoring dignitaries such as Russ Feingold, recall taking a poll each year of the hundreds of attendees -- they regularly raved about the food and service. Similar reports come in from the annual induction fete honoring hundreds of machinists and their families, the occasional AFL-CIO conventions, the health and occupational service national societies and others now in pursuit of a new regular home.

The Wyndham will close Dec. 22. The property will either be razed or converted, probably into retail space, though the tales of its fate vary. But not a hotel.

The decision became official with the filing of a WARN notice - the state's legal requirement to give workers a 60-day notice of closing - in this case throwing 133 employees out of work including 63



Mario Marin spoke about Workers United issues at the November MALC delegate meeting.

union restaurant and hotel members of Workers United. Leaders of the union expect a few to be picked up by other union hotels such as the Hyatt and are negotiating with Wyndham sellers on a severance package, said Mario Marin of Workers United Local 122. But the situation is fluid and he is working to get

the sellers to talk to him.
The Wyndham, whose appraisal indicates 323 rooms though the hotel original used 500, was acquired by Wachovia Bank's mortgage division in a foreclosure operation and now has apparently been sold to an unnamed developer talking about turning the hotel into small retail spaces, either by razing the existing property or converting it. The land and the hotel vary in appraisal but this in total is probably in the range of \$6 million - and a lot of history.

Calendar

Visit www.milwaukeeelabor.org for updated events

Wednesday, November 28

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

Wednesday, December 5

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

Friday, December 14

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

Wednesday, January 9

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



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Finale

From Page 1

eight of them, barely missing the ninth by fewer than 97,000 votes out of 4.45 million (North Carolina). Pollsters who predicted the final results noted afterward that if anything they under-shot how well the Obama team kept and maintained its coalition. And union grassroots were a big part of the victory.

Despite the claims that dominated TV, Mitt Romney never came close to flipping the map, failing to make gains in Pennsylvania and losing Ohio. That internal dismay by a team clearly outmatched by Organizing for America provided a curious 90 minute delay in conceding. I suspect this was more about realizing that Romney was also going to lose Virginia and Florida and really had no way forward even if he was talked into dragging Ohio uselessly through a court battle.

The election killed - at least on a national level - the myth of the dim-bulbed American voter along with the fantasy of the Reagan Democrat. Yes, in local races and entrenched enclaves of self-comforting righteousness, money and right-wing principles still rule, but nationally common sense evaluation of how well this president was handling his job won out. The GOP's superior money, their endless wealthy anonymous third party ad conduits, the frightening hostility of their attacks on Obama's Americanism, their efforts to paint a leader dedicated to compromise and negotiation as a dictator - all failed.

"We are not as divided as our politics suggest," said Obama in an eloquent but actually quite thoughtful acceptance

speech the morning of November 7, which may go down in history as one of his best. "We are not as cynical as the pundits believe."

The voting pattern that still will bother many Americans is that Mitt Romney even came close with about 48% of the national vote. Pollsters who had it right point out that Rasmussen, the conservatives' favorite pollster, was consistently wrong in hyping Romney - off by 3 percentage points in poll after poll. Dead right again was poll analyst Nate Silver of fivethirtyeight.

Southern states in particular remain remarkably hostile to Obama while Western and even Midwest states that trend red proved more balanced. Even where Romney won their electoral votes, Obama fared strongly.

Romney will probably be criticized as a candidate but on reflection, what else could he do but dodge and sell in the face of a popular and capable incumbent?

Even Romney finally returned to sensibility in a gracious concession speech so startlingly different to the lies and feints of his final campaign. It was a recognition that the nation's progress, in defeat, was too important for political games. But it was also recognition that Obama now had the upper hand and something of a mandate to move forward in his measured manner - that the Republicans had spent four years and some \$500 million demeaning the most consequential and conciliatory Democratic president they could hope for.

Unfortunately, while many Republicans now read the handwriting on the wall and know they must pull back from the extremism that long controlled their policy, grouchy Senate leader Mitch McConnell stood in



"We are not as cynical as the pundits believe."

— Barack Obama Nov. 7

retorical defiance November 7 - at least initially. Realists on both sides surely recognize that it will take years for full economic recovery and that any president will need cooperation, tax revenue as well as budget reductions, to move forward.

But Mitch's grumpy old man act may be understandable. This bourbon-loving political player twice saw his own party's refusal to be sensible cost him majority control of the Senate. It happened again when two states normally GOP, Missouri and Indiana, went to the Democrats because of the rape twins, Todd Aikins and Richard Mourdock, who destroyed their chances by revealing aloud how too many Republican men know so little about women.

Even in a strongly GOP state like Montana, Democrat Jon Tester retained his US senate seat and while Romney took North Dakota it was moderate Democratic powerhouse Heidi Heitkamp who took the Senate.

The hostility of the GOP to Latino concerns was crucial, but the hostility to women produced more women in the Senate than before and demonstrated again that the Democrats were a far more welcoming party - and they didn't even have to order up binders to find qualified females.

Even with a GOP House and initially grumpy opponents, Obama gained leverage and a clear mandate that the public wants to get things done. The continued GOP control of the House was quickly misconstrued by some corners of the GOP who didn't get the message of what the general public wants.

House races are cases of individual districts where historical patterns dominate, changes are slower and entrenched power and money can rule. Even a 52% victory in Wisconsin translates quite differently given red designed redistricting. It shouldn't disguise the general trend of the electorate is younger and more insistent on change, compromise and cooperation.

Truly on issues the Democrats gained, but this was not a Democrats vs. Republican contest - this was the public saying "Get things done!" Obama was shrewd enough or perhaps humanistic enough to recognize that and make it the central power of his campaign. He ignored the statistical excesses of the other side and put his faith in the public recognizing how much he had done and how well he had done in a lousy situation.

His victory brought to mind that satirical Onion headline in 2008 - "Black Man Given Nation's Worst Job." And he's got it again.

He is likely to continue to dismay the most liberal corners of his own party and even some union members by continuing to seek compromise, ignoring the clearly nasty nature of the opposition. But the clean support

from the nation gave him new leverage. It means he can draw a line in the sand on important principles established in the campaign on gaining tax revenue from the very rich, closing corporate loopholes and protecting Medicare and Social Security from voucher fantasies.

There was another surprise in a \$4 billion national election. The superior conservative money hurt in local races but it didn't derail the country's trend to a more inclusive vision. But it certainly had an effect in Wisconsin local politics where the GOP largely used money and control of the media coverage to take back the state senate by either one or two votes and fought back moderate gains in the Assembly.

But even Gov. Scott Walker must realize he faces a new world where he can't bully through legislation - and he faces a genuine election in 2014 where recall is not the issue but failed economic policy certainly will be, particularly if the rest of the nation continues to rise while Wisconsin staggers.

The Obama team was focused on its own re-election, so it didn't work down-ballot a lot, except for select Senate races like Tammy Baldwin's strong victory over Tommy Thompson.

That's hardly a criticism of the Obama campaign - re-electing the president was primary.

But it underlies the reality of how progressive Wisconsin can hardly rest on its laurels but take to heart the president's message that victory only means getting back to work with even greater determination and sweat.

There is a target on the back of politicians who don't produce or only produce ideas bad for this new and largely non white bloc of decisive voters. Dare I say it, but 2014 is just around the corner.

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GOP stifled crucial tax study before election

By Dominique Paul Noth, Editor, Labor Press

You may question the economic astuteness of the American voter - indeed, the right-wing money dispensers still do after November 6. Clearly the average voter employed common sense rather than detailed analysis about who had a more convincing case.

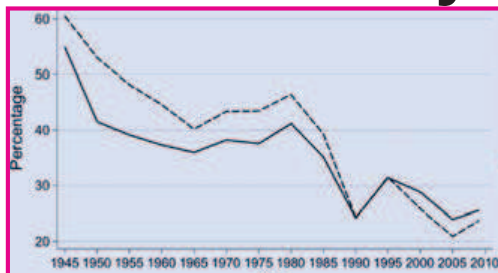
But rather shockingly these much maligned American voters displayed a fiscal astuteness supported by economists -- and that is not just from a liberal perspective. On tax realities, they instinctively concluded what congressional intellectuals had determined weeks before the election and that Senate Republicans had worked mightily to hide from the headlines to protect a fading philosophy.

Only on the eve of the election, and now afterward as news outlets picked up on the GOP ploy, the truth is coming out. It is a story worth knowing even after the election. But we have to take you inside the bureaucratic wonkishness of the federal government, the devotees of analysis who operate hidden whatever party is in power and refuse to let partisan feelings, which they certainly have, get in the way of research. This dedication made repulsive those attempts by the right-wing to debunk the unemployment analysis of Department of Labor Statistics bureaucrats -- and it makes this particular story doubly ugly.

The Congressional Research Service is one such bureau, devoted to history and data scrubbing. Its work is done at the request of members of Congress and congressional committees and is thoroughly reviewed by layers of checkers. But a CRS report can, though rarely, be blocked by members of Congress if they don't like what it found or dispute the basis of the conclusions. The service can also pull a report back itself if it has interior doubts, though in this case its leaders stood by the results though GOP operatives apparently screamed at them.

On September 14 the CRS issued the dryly titled report "Taxes and the Economy: An Economic Analysis of the Top Tax Rates Since 1945." Its 20 pages of summary, charts and conclusion, all once hidden, is now in the Take Action section of our website, milwaukeekeelabor.org.

The election is over but the conclusions were there



Charts on declines in taxes in suppressed CRS report undercut GOP arguments. Dotted line is top .01%.

long before - in time to destroy Romney before the debates. The report undercut the central argument of Romney's campaign, the continuing argument of the Tea Party that a slight increase in the tax rates of the top 2% (actually a mere 3% rise back to the Clinton era) would hurt the economy, the argument still being propagated by the Cantor-Ryan ilk of the House Republicans.

If the report's vetted background and data had been publicized in September, it would have forced Romney-Ryan to address pointed precise questions rather than continue the dodgeball they became famous for.

After a studious analysis of tax rates since 1945, pointing out that today's tax rates for the richest are the lowest in history, the CRS study landed the hard blows:

- The reduction in the top tax rates appears to be uncorrelated with saving, investment, and productivity growth.
- The top tax rates appear to have little or no relation to the size of the economic pie.
- However, the top tax rate reductions appear to be associated with the increasing concentration of income at the top of the income distribution.

To translate into simpler English - reducing the top tax rates doesn't hurt the economy but keeping them high helps the rich get richer without any sign of better income trickling down.

The Beltway knowledgeable can guess what hap-

pened. The staffs of such GOP leaders as Sen. Mitch McConnell moved immediately to quash the report. They internally debunked the conclusions as too narrow in methodology because it referred as accurate shorthand to the "Bush tax cuts." They suggested the conclusions were too "freighted" - meaning "frightening." In their protests and demand that the report be pulled, they began a campaign against its chief author and long respected policy analyst, Thomas L. Hungerford, who had given \$5,000 to Democratic candidates and campaigns in his private life.

Let's pause for a moment here. The Heritage Foundation is funded by the Koch brothers and its researchers and even its studies regularly support Republican candidates and principles, but they are looked at. Economists take the time to scrutinize for bias rather than dismissing out of hand. The CRS report was only released after such intense analysis by a federal agency dedicated to nonpartisan fact-checking - and its economic overseers supported it. Yet Hungerford may now find any of his future work questioned not because of its value but because of the tar and feathers employed to demean him.

Note how the GOP attack machine found willing dupes in the media including the co-host of MSNBC's "The Cycle," conservative commentator S.E. Cupp.

"This has hues of a banana republic," noted New York's Democratic senator, Charles Schumer, a noted partisan. But he discussed the report in a speech weeks before the media started catching on. "They didn't like a report, and instead of rebutting it, they had them take it down."

New media technology has indeed changed the game, albeit a bit slowly. Despite the GOP maneuvers, the Internet produced copies of the report by early November. It has since been used by many news outlets for much publicized discussions.

It turns out that the voters on their own figured out the truth tellers but you can still find this "any tax rate increase is horrible" vision running all over the conservative community. You can't help feeling the right-wing couldn't be so blind to facts if the CRS report had been given full release and examination when first created.

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Voters survive tons of suppression tactics

The courts helped Wisconsin dodge the ugliest part of the voter law changes the GOP sought to force, specifically requiring limited forms of voter ID that were ruled the equivalent of a poll tax.

On November 6, there were glitches in voting machines, threats of intimidation and long lines that particularly impacted minority communities in Wisconsin -- but no photo ID requirement, though unfolding election protection reports will reveal that some poll workers were still confused and asked voters to show an ID.

Perhaps some of that was due to the last minute efforts by the Republican state attorney general, J.D. Van Hollen, or the voter fraud billboards pasted in minority communities by a conservative family foundation to scare people.

Parts of the law did force some changes - signing a voter log - that didn't much advantage one side. The change that did was aimed at depressing liberal turnout since shorter periods for residency were particularly aimed at students who change residence a lot and tend to vote for Democrats. Many think that did hurt, but it also angered young people into forcefully turning out for Obama.

But while we ducked the worst suppression efforts intended by such laws - which do not even accomplish the protection against voter fraud they advertise -- other states suffered far more deeply. More than 30 states impose one version or another of onerous (as opposed to benign) voter ID.

Many so angered their constituency by forcing lines and blockades to easy voting that Nov. 6 demonstrated how many were willing to stand in lanes for hours to vote in states controlled by Republicans where the Democratic candidates won big.

In addition to voter ID efforts, there were tactics to mislead and intimidate.

In Pennsylvania, which went to Obama in the presidential race despite last minute head fakes by the GOP, a state judge ruled Oct. 2 that voters were not required to show photo ID this election. Yet the state under GOP rule continued with a \$5 million ad campaign to broadcast the defeated photo ID requirement as fact. A spokesman for the Pennsylvania secretary of state told the Washington Post these ads remain "faithful" to the judge's ruling, which held that elections officials could still ask voters just not require it.

Curious when you compare the defense to the wording. "Show It," the ad slogan reads, with the words, "if you have it," in smaller fine print. There was no advance voting in the state, a combination that the GOP pretended - and even boasted -- would work to Romney's advantage. Boy, were the state GOP politicians wrong.

In addition, the state's largest utility company, Peco, sent a newsletter to 1.3 million customers informing them they'd need valid photo ID to vote - though the judge had already ruled they didn't have to.

In Missouri, the Republican candidate for secretary of state ran on a platform touting a new



Arlene Holt Baker leads the AFL-CIO effort on voter rights. She toured Wisconsin election day before speaking at jobs rallies.

voter ID law. Except the state doesn't currently have a photo ID requirement - since the courts struck the idea down. The outgoing secretary of state said the campaign focus was potentially confusing for voters.

In Tennessee, where a voter ID law went into effect this year, state officials were instructing some counties not to honor photo library cards as an acceptable form of voter ID. The city of Memphis sued, and just a week before the election, the Tennessee Supreme Court affirmed a lower court's ruling that voters can cast regular ballots using free library cards.

In Florida, the Republican-controlled legislature shortened the early voting time frame this year from 14 to eight days - excluding the Sunday before Election Day. The tighter window resulted in long lines, frustration and litigation.

Such delays were hardly a surprise. The League of Women Voters and the Florida Democratic Party before the election called for Gov. Rick Scott to extend early voting hours in the state as preceding Republican governors had done. Scott refused.

Amid the confusion, with voters standing in line for hours after the polls closed, Florida also featured complicated ballots, 12 pages long. It was one of the most confusing ballots in the country. Throw in shorthanded election staff and Florida couldn't even declare that Obama

won the state until Nov. 10. Complicated ballots deliberately delayed counting and severely crippled Arizona where elections remained undecided even past our press deadlines.

All of this produced lawsuits and even brought the attention of the president in his victory speech.

In South Carolina, up to "tens of thousands voters statewide" were issued disqualifying absentee ballots that didn't correspond to their correct district. Voters in other states also faced confusion fueled by redistricting.

And we haven't even discussed provisional ballots, with state rules varying but having one thing in common - they are time-consuming to count.

Fortunately, election education campaigns forewarned many voters in these states, thanks to active efforts of the national AFL-CIO, the League of Women Voters and various election protection volunteers.

Registered voters in Florida, Virginia and Indiana also received calls from phony elections officials encouraging them to "vote by phone." The complaints have been reported by both Democrats and Republicans. Voters in at least 23 Florida counties also received letters on "official-looking election office letterhead" questioning their citizenship and voter eligibility.

Still, why are these voter ID laws so strongly opposed?

Many still feel that presenting a photo identification has become a normal part of their consumer activity, without realizing that voting is not a consumer transaction and that the objection is not to identification but to narrow forms of identification that cost many people money to acquire.

Arlene Holt Baker heads the AFL-CIO voter protection effort. The federation's executive vice president, one of its three top leaders, has toured the nation checking out voter protection activities and speaks eloquently on TV about how voting is a cornerstone of democracy wrongly confused with a consumer activity. As she points out, "15% of voting age young people make too little money to afford cars or bother getting a driver's license." The voter ID laws "seem targeted to disproportionately impact people of color and young people - strongly Democratic voting groups."

Other voting law opponents provided formidable detail in court cases of how these laws disproportionately affect elderly, minority and low-income groups and the burdensome costs and time involved. A study from NYU's Brennan Center found 11% of voting-age citizens lack necessary photo ID while many in rural areas have trouble accessing ID offices. During closing arguments in a recent case over Texas' voter ID law, a lawyer for the state brushed aside these obstacles as the "reality of choosing to live in that part of Texas."

Given the sometimes costly steps required to obtain needed documents today, legal scholars argue that photo ID laws create a new "financial barrier to the ballot box."

Even more powerfully, the fear of voter fraud is badly exaggerated. There have been only a small number of fraud cases resulting in a conviction. A New York Times analysis identified 120 cases filed by the Justice Department nationally over five years. These cases, many of which stemmed from mistakenly filled registration forms or misunderstanding over voter eligibility, resulted in 86 convictions.

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Reasons majority told GOP hustlers 'No Sale'

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

Amazingly and in defiance of the media's "squeaker" expectations, Barack Obama overcame a slowness in economic recovery news that would have previously destroyed any candidate for the White House. Now hot in negotiations with obstinate opponents, it's high time to recall what the voters decreed - not status quo but "your job is not as important as our jobs," to paraphrase the president. And they re-elected someone good at his job, rejecting the come-ons of the super-salesman the GOP picked.

Obama trusted the American people Nov. 6 to recognize how well he had danced us back from a cliff and then moved the country astutely forward on all fronts - domestic as well as foreign. He demonstrated in attitude as well as vision that he was the agent of change, not that other guy who stole his "change" mantra.

The national vote may not count as much as the battleground states, but he won that, too, by 2%.

He exposed the weaknesses of the confidence men on the other side whose generalities and promises became increasingly flawed weapons. More amazing to angry citizens he ignored some of the ugliest campaign deceptions and personal attacks in my memory.

The result had to brace the nation's image of itself. Obama won a second term in unassailable terms - not 1% as envisioned by the Wisconsin GOP but by 7% in the state. Even Tammy Baldwin took out Tommy Thompson with a 5% edge that few had predicted.

Nationally the voters told politicians to buckle down and support the grownup in the room.

There were some remarkable results particularly given the headwinds facing Obama and an opposition that had made defeating him their No. 1 goal, at which they badly failed.

- He emerged stronger in Wisconsin than he had in 2008. The turnout in Milwaukee alone was an amazing 87% of registered city voters, but Obama even won counties that re-elected GOP vice presidential candidate Paul Ryan to the House, underlying how little help Ryan was to the ticket.

- He was the first Democrat since FDR to win more than 50% of the national popular vote in two back-to-back races.

- He improved over his run-away 2008 victory with 71% of Latinos, 70% of Asian voters, 60% of all 18-29 and 60% unmarried women.

- Romney and Ryan also became the first political tag teams since McGovern-Shriver in the Nixon era to lose both their home states.

Analysis

So now the GOP must take its head out of the sand. If Obama was helped by the timing of the hurricane, it was because it was an opportunity unsought to demonstrate his professionalism and the guts under his rhetoric - the ability much maligned to cut tape and work across the aisle.

His opponents deceived about -- and even his own campaign strangely didn't centralize on -- his remarkable successes in steady policy in his first two years until they blocked any progress (and even then he made progress through executive order and foreign action).

His early successes included reversing "don't ask don't tell," eliminating middle-men profit-takers in student loans, supporting methods for women to claim equal pay for equal work, stimulating the economy with infrastructure repairs and shovel-ready projects (many quietly pushed by the right wing), controlling Wall Street excess, rescuing key industries and (did you know?) instituting policies that actually cut the debt.

He did point out on the campaign trail that he ended one war, was winding down the other and helped change the world without putting more boots on the ground - all easy points to make in a speech - but he ducked discussing a range of fine-tuning changes in civil rights and fiscal guardianship. These were not detailed in those thousands of ads and hundreds of speeches.

But you can't dispute the success of the strategy, which was emphasize better direction for the nation and actual plans and accomplishments unlike the sky pie that Romney offered (Romney in effect said since he had done well in the past the vot-



One way Tammy Baldwin won big was campaigning harder, tirelessly across the state. She was always at it, shown here surrounded by North Shore volunteers a few days before the finale. ers should trust him in the future).

Obama had both a record in office and a philosophy that relied on America's belief in its own work ethic and pulling together. He spoke of trusting a public that would believe in him despite the dishonest and well-funded attacks against him. Apparently, the voters overcame the blitzkrieg of doubts orchestrated in anti-Obama ads - or were so outraged they responded with support.

Obama sidestepped through action and argument that 2010 GOP election victory that was supposed to shame him into submission. He reduced those results to largely what they were - overreaching fear about the American people, misplaced boogeyman tactics against him, health care and the deep hole the country was in. But mainly, Obama treated 2010 as a political aberration, which it proved to be. In clinging to that election as some people do to their guns and religion, the GOP disappointed its most thoughtful members.

This was in presidential terms hardly the status quo election the GOP and sympathetic bloggers pretend, arguing that the US House remained in GOP hands and scoffing at how the Senate, more reflective of nation-

Connecticut and others. Even in North Dakota, a state Romney carried, Democrat Heidi Heitkamp won the senate seat by 3,000 votes over another rape policy extremist, Rick Berg. Heitkamp ran away from Obama on energy policy in a state as swim with oil jobs but she also supports the Buffet Rule, defended the core of Obamacare and is a fiscal conservative in line with her retiring predecessor, policy wonk Democrat Kent Conrad.

There were bad things in this election. Voters had to stand for hours in line simply to vote, something Obama himself said needed to be immediately addressed. But the world also saw a determined public provide some balance to the fear-mongering over the deficit (more than two-thirds caused before Obama) and slow job creation.

And the voters absolutely saved an originally Republican idea for future generations -- affordable coverage with a public tax mandate: Obamacare.

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Showdown

From Page 1

had actually caravanned with the local election protection team. She leads the AFL-CIO's national voter rights protection effort.

The signs told it all - in effect saying "Don't give up what you won, Obama!" Moore got all the attendees to sign her placards. Baker roused the crowd with an impassioned plea to retain the coalition and make sure any negotiations now actively ongoing protected benefits for the retirees. The talk about a "grand bargain" that failed to deliver on election promises was falling on deaf progressive ears.

According to an AFL-CIO election survey of the general public conducted by Hart Research Associates, by a 64% to 17% margin, voters agreed to maintain Social Security and Medicare benefits, and address the deficit by increasing taxes on the rich.

The evening of November 9 the arguments expanded and so did the pressure. The event was headlined "The Election Is Over, but the Showdown Is Just Beginning." Chief organizer was the sophisticated room-dominating organizer Jennifer Epps-Addison of Citizen Action.

Citizens packed Washington Park Senior Center and even filled the aisles for the meeting, though the chief attraction was a chance to cheer a brief late-arriving speaker, newly elected US Sen. Tammy Baldwin. She deepened the argument of Citizen Action, Working America and other groups that the core purposes of Medicare, Social Security and Medicaid should not be bargained away to gain more revenue, but she carefully indicated that it was important to give the president room to maneuver outside the spotlight. This was common sense from a committed unmovable progressive who understands the machinations of Beltway politics.

Baldwin wants Obama to push hard and the Republicans to accept the simple Buffet Rule change in tax codes that would force a billionaire to pay as much in federal income taxes as his or her secretary does.

She did not address her unusual circumstance, shared by two other newly elected senators. In the current House, she is still a representative through December and would have a vote if a deal is made quickly. In the new Congress, when she takes the oath Jan. 1 she is a senator who could be part of a larger Democratic majority to further any deal if it takes that long.

One way or another she will be a key player.

There is a push to get the old House to protect the lower 98% from tax increases (the Bush era taxes including protection of the wealthiest end Jan. 1). And if that fails the new Congress must step in. To many, this is one of the president's biggest bargaining chips - made a deal now because the future puts the GOP in a poorer position. Whatever John Boehner or his most resistant House members say about opposing increased tax rates, the rates automatically increase Jan. 1 reverting across the board to previous levels. So it is nonsense before the TV cameras to insist on no higher tax rates - Congress agreed to those when the GOP was in control.

There is a wrinkle in the form of a deal early in the year to make a deal - the so-called sequestration issue and the thing the media and partisans erroneously describe as the "fiscal cliff" though it is more like a several months steep slope.

The GOP agreed to negotiate spending cuts and now agree that failing to display common sense would automatically trigger cuts to the defense across the board that both sides regard as draconian rather than the measured reductions that both the Pentagon and Obama want. But it was the GOP who put the nation in this bind and objectively bear the biggest burden of not cutting spending, which was the core of the sequestration threat.



AFL-CIO executive VP from D.C., Arlene Holt Baker (left), joined newly re-elected US Rep. Gwen Moore outside her office Nov. 8 for a media event. Also in attendance (background) was MALC leader Sheila Cochran. That evening, organizer Jennifer Epps-Addison (below) orchestrated a similar but even more crowded event at the Washington Park Senior Center, where new senator Tammy Baldwin also spoke.



So here is what must seem contrary. On the one hand the streets and citizens are full of euphoria. It was palpable. On the other hand, the progressives are organizing to hold Obama's feet to the fire and not cave on their essential points.

Their zealotry raises fears that they may be cutting into his ability to maneuver in private if they force him into a public statement. In fact, leading Democrats involved in negotiations stepped forward immediately to say Social Security would not be on the bargaining table because it is not part of the deficit. It was clearly an effort to reassure the concerned. Meanwhile the race is on to avoid sequestration. "Any deal," a Republican insider told Labor Press, "must involve some face-saving measures so both sides can claim balance if not victory in the dealings."

The fastest way, as Obama noted in a White House address Nov. 9, is to pass the "protect the 98%" in tax levels deal that all sides generally agree to and is contained in a Senate bill that only needs House passage, which the Tea Party blocked. Historians also note how earlier this year because of Tea pressure Boehner backed out on a deal that would in effect offer \$9 in spending cuts for every \$1 in increased tax revenue. To the Tea Party it violated their ridiculous Grover Norquist "no tax increase ever" pledge. Now they may long to see Obama go back to that deal, which was in addition to the trillion dollars in spending cuts he has already initiated. Many of his advisers want to hold out for a new deal.

To emphasize how willing he was to protect the 98% with a new bill confirming their current tax rates, Obama even took out his pen with a flourish to emphasize he is ready to act. The choice, he noted, is to avoid punishing everyone not rich, plus there could some costly impacts on alternative tax levels and other issues affecting the middle class and Wall Street confidence. Failing to act smoothly and relatively quickly could, economists warn, tilt a slowly recovering economy into new recession.

Normally protecting the middle class while gaining revenue from the high rich - and maybe even extending payroll taxes for another year -- would be a slam dunk. It and a lot more are being negotiated as we go to press. But here is the fear that confronts the euphoria. While few wanted Romney, the progressives note that Obama seeks conciliation and is dealing with a stiff-necked right-wing. Even a left-center leader is not as far left as many want, and his willingness to work with the other side is admirable in the abstract but, some feel, dangerous given the obstructive tactics of his opposition.

These right-wingers may strike the public as crazy but they actually think they won or maintained some sort of

status quo Nov. 6. They simply don't believe they lost. Intelligent voices in their party sometimes seemed cowed.

The left and even many moderates fear the president may be tempted by the outlines of a "grand bargain" many on the right and even some Democrats are pushing. Those dealmakers say that if Obama simply agrees to raising the age at which Social Security retirees can start collecting what they set aside over decades of work, he would get the right-wing votes to pass his revenue in a heartbeat.

It is this sort of "grand bargain" concept that outrages the coalition that helped elect Obama - and they are not waiting for the difficult behind-scenes negotiations on tax reform to make their case. "It would be a betrayal of his victory," one speaker said at Washington Park Senior Center, which was jammed with supporters.

Other speakers were disturbingly not precise about the data behind their fears. They employed exaggerated statistics and even doomsday scenarios of any deal that did not restore the 39% tax rates on the top 2%, though economists see other ways to get to the revenue demands the president is pursuing (a mixture of formulas, lower tax rates for companies that create significant new American jobs, etc.) The pronounced fear underneath was the GOP would try to make a deal on Social Security age or cutting Medicare and Medicaid benefits.

That more than economic statistics, a moving target, is the winning argument for progressives because it can be framed in human terms. In Massachusetts, retiring but still influential Rep. Barney Frank said there is no humanity and no sense in "making a waitress who started carrying heavy trays at age 18 wait until she is 70 to get her own contributions back."

At the Moore event, Brad Ennos, a Ladish worker who lives in Racine (Paul Ryan territory) brought gasps describing the muscles needed to handle huge equipment, the heat and fumes workers must endure. Then he brought mutters of outrage when he dissected the Ryan plan and the idiocy of expecting that workers under 55 face vouchers rather than good health coverage just to save the rich a few dollars - not to mention the concept of forcing people to work past 65 before they can get what they set aside for retirement.

The other impulse visible among Obama supporters far and wide was an echo of the president's need to listen to his constituents and ask them to stay involved. They are willing to making him do so by taking him on.

At the crowded rally outside her office, Moore got personal to make the point, reminding listeners how she like so many other Obama supporters at his first inauguration were busy celebrating "while the other side went into the war room."

"I put on my fancy earrings and black evening dress," she recalled. "Not this time. No more chicken wings. No Doritos."

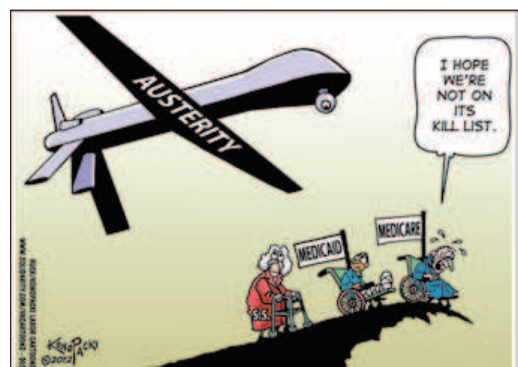
This "fool me once but never again" attitude now dominates. Political activists speak openly about maintaining the new coalition in a way never done before - such as the off-year nonpresidential election of 2014. They are already working on ways in Wisconsin to build permanently on the gains of women, Latinos and other major new forces if any effort is made by the state Republicans to further their negative agenda on workers and loss of local control.

Nationally there is a similar movement. Even workers who would be hurt as assuring Obama, they are "ready to go to the cliff and fall off it" if that is what it takes to return the right-wing to reality.

The ball is now in the president's court, but he faces losing his dominant new coalition if he can't come to a deal they can live with.



Before TV cameras and fellow workers, Ladish employee Brad Ennos described why benefits should be protected.



Why Soc Sec age has become vital issue

The right wing keeps offering examples of bureaucrats in air-conditioned offices, bankers and bookkeepers who have not, they say, been physically beaten down by working past 65. Of course, they haven't asked those workers if they are ready to see the government renege on the promise they were counting on.

The larger problem with their argument, of course, is it avoids what these workers did over the years to earn air-conditioning, or even the corner office, how many hours their bosses force them to put in, the mental fitness issues, how time and intense effort bring health problems as does physical labor in any job - not to mention breaking the promise made when the workers started paying Social Security looking forward to relaxing at 65. The importance of the promise doesn't change



The placards filling the rally stage said "No More Tax Cuts for the Rich" and "Save Our Benefits." Gwen Moore (right) collected them all and urged those in attendance to sign them for her memory book. Among those quick to respond were such labor leaders as the secretary-treasurer of the state AFL-CIO, Stephanie Bloomingdale (left) and the similar titled Sheila Cochran of the MALC.

because you alter the promise for an established worker in their thirties, forties or fifties.

The argument that health advances allow senior citizens to live longer also contains some

absurdities. Shouldn't that be a plus in retirement years as opposed to the actuarial table horror the right-wing suggests? Wasn't there a time when Republicans as well as Democrats hoped the average worker could move to a 35-hour week and not have to apologize for it? That was actually the historical platforms of all stripes of politicians back in the day.

Yet the age-raising advocates suggest that living longer costs taxpayers money and that should be the nation's central concern.

The argument also falls apart simply by looking out the windows at ditch diggers, truck drivers, construction workers, good teachers, garbage collectors to name a few.

Some conservatives argue that few are kept in backbreaking hard labor as they grow old but are promoted into more sedentary jobs. Well, look out the window. Check the available census tables to see how long people stay in such jobs. In fact, who on the outside understands just what sort of job and intensity take the real physical toll?

The right-wing also adds the argument of fewer workers now coming into the payroll tax pool, suggesting that the original idea of everyone helping everyone else out must vanish when there are fewer "everyones" in the workforce than there were in the 1950s. Of course, back then, income growth was not stagnated as it has been by restrictive policies, so that does smell a little of creating a problem in order to offer a self-serving solution.

But in her event November 9 speaking against raising the age

of Social Security, while being open to other solutions, US Rep. Gwen Moore told the crowd outside her office of the far simpler and more successful solutions at hand.

For decades, she noted, the payroll tax has been stuck around \$106,000 as the top income at which citizens were required by law to be in the program -- even as demographics demonstrate a vast increase in salary levels (though stagnation in middle class buying power).

So raising the annual salaries covered by Social Security, perhaps to \$140,000 a year, solves the money problem looming many decades away. In addition, immediate immigration reform - which the GOP clearly would need as a first step to winning back the Latino vote - is actually an economic boom for the entire Social Security-Medicare-Medicaid issue.

If a pathway to citizenship and full Social Security coverage was introduced, millions more workers would immediately be added to the payroll tax rolls.

All these are pragmatic fiscal realities - the sort Republicans ignored during the recent national election - that should be first in negotiations and contradict all the talk about age raising. This has become the central push of unions as well as progressive groups.

As these negotiations unfold, it will be interesting to watch if the human costs drive the negotiations -- or if it will be the poker chips put on the political table. -- D.P.N.



Latinos move to solidify election lessons

Immediately after the election United We Dream, the nation's largest network of undocumented immigrant youth, reiterated what all television networks had been stating: "The anti-immigrant agenda has lost. Mitt Romney's low Latino voter turnout is directly related to his anti-immigrant stance."

"Polls show Latino voters voted with Dreamers in mind and we are planning to win additional victories for our families and entire communities," said Cristina Jimenez, managing director of United We Dream - one of the many calls from community groups to solidify the victory and direction of the nation reflected in the vote.

"We will continue to push both Republicans and Democrats to design a permanent policy that both provides citizenship and relief to 11 million undocumented people," said Lorella Praeli, advocacy and policy director of United We Dream.

"Latino voters were driven to the polls this year because they supported a student's goal to be the first one in their family to go to college, a worker's right to be treated with respect, a family's dream to stay united in the only country they call home," said Dream member Daniel Rodriguez. "Latino voters have a check to cash in 2013."

On a similar front, Voces de la Frontera in Wisconsin is continuing its push for immigration reform, pointing out that its efforts brought Obama the highest Latino vote in history in the November 6 election.

Said Christine Neumann-Ortiz, Voces' executive director: "We demand that President Obama and the US Congress prioritize federal immigration reform."

Preliminary data in nine wards Voces de la Frontera Action targeted showed an increase of voter turnout of around 68% compared to the 2008 presidential election.

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Recalling unsavory bickering at University Club

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

Six weeks before the election, inside the posh businessman-centered confines of the University Club, a crowded room got a glimpse from the audience of the peculiar fiscal blinders that had overtaken the Koch Brothers-Sheldon Addison-Karl Rove side of the gridlock.

It was unsettling because they were unmovable in their attitudes. In hindsight they were dead wrong about even the early polling data in front of them.

The right-wingers and a number of union and middle of the road members of the community - from training leaders to the mayor to the county executive - had been drawn by the promise of a scholarly detailed outline of the administration's four-pronged approach to the economy by one of its leading thinkers, Rebecca Blank, acting secretary of commerce. Then as now, people were eager for details and they had been hard to come by. What sort of compromise was the president willing to offer? Was there a faster road to recovery?

Those were the political overtones the speaker was prepared for even though she was going to discuss general needs

Comment

for cooperation. I am not sure that even the knowledgeable Blank was prepared for what was going to hit her in the question and answer session.

Her actual presentation was workmanlike. Blank pointed to the steady climb upward after the Bush era failures - 30 months (now 32) of job growth, not remarkable in size but clearly remarkable in contrast. She pointed out other major signs of recovery including booming Wall Street, loosening credit, rescue of a million auto industry jobs. But she made quite specific suggestions about moving forward, city and nation.

She put front and center consumer confidence and spending, the steady climb to believing in the country as opposed to doomsday slathering.

"Consumer spending is the single biggest driver of the economy," she reminded the assembled. "We need to make sure that America's families have the confidence and the ability to spend money on things they want and need, beyond just buying groceries and paying their bills." The major factor in the debt explo-

sion has been the decline in government revenues, she noted - and that began a year before Obama even took office.

In precise economist terms she described the multiplier effect of such ability to buy and spend, but she laced that with practical examples of how the country must continue to grow manufacturing, in-source jobs and reward companies that buy into the concept -- and develop a fairer taxation system that requires the richest pay a bit more.

Blank occupies the position that, if Obama ever gets his way with Congress to save more money by compressing the bureaucracy, would become a key to folding nine agencies under a sort of Business Secretary. She pointed out that the nation could expect big rewards once Obama wins - and even on Sept. 10 she was confident he would win - with a more cooperative Congress focused on creating rather than impeding job growth.

It must have sounded nuts to some people in the audience but Nov. 6 proved her right.

The Q&A was dominated by right-wing skepticism. A polite talk turned into an attack on her,



Rebecca Blank being interviewed by JS reporter Don Walker.

which Blank continued to gently debunk as partisan myths. It was an ironic follow-up to her sober invitation to cooperatively discuss. Most of the questions made Mayor Tom Barrett, who introduced Blank, show me what he had scribbled on the back of an envelope - it was like déjà vu, he indicated, an echo of the Republican political convention.

A roomful of supposedly thoughtful businessmen started peppering Blank with the Armageddon that in those days dominated the airwaves, forcing her to correction of extremist premises and then some sharp counters. Why is Obama anti-oil, demanded one questioner, leading Blank to "strongly disagree" and note how Obama has actually increased domestic oil production while insisting on an "all of the above" energy approach. Yet the oily complain because he won't bend over to continue their corporate welfare or give in to every demand.

Blank noted that she was expressing her own insights into energy policy since her department does not set that table -- something the questioner knew but was trying to score a cheap point.

OK, so the pesky facts may be on her side, but a later question kept up the prattle that the deficit more than job creation was driving the nation to ruin.


But here was the irony. Unknowingly the simpletons were now in Blank's ballpark.

She cut her teeth as an economic player in the Clinton era succeeding in turning a sizable deficit into the surplus to hand to Bush. So she had facts and success on her side about how a steady, determined process needed a rising economy to correct the problem.

Clinton took a piece by piece, year by year approach, she recalled. She contrasted this careful "chip-away" philosophy to all the rhetoric about sweeping reductions in government spending -- the Romney-Ryan plan. That may appeal to an instant gratification society. But massive cuts in a weak economy clearly risk the real Armageddon.

It's worth recalling that Blank had the outline right weeks before the voters agreed. Romney never said what he would do - he simply assumed the public would be convinced because Obama wasn't saying enough. The voters, unlike the well-dressed business leaders packing the University Club, put their trust in the future. They weren't convinced that just because Romney said he was Speedy Alka-Seltzer his ideas had any fizz, but the business leaders believed him. The voters didn't blame Obama for not being Superman, for failing to run through the "brick wall" of GOP obstinacy to resolve the debt-ceiling crisis, but from the questions it seemed the business leaders did, that they were locked into a "white knight" vision of the president.

Color them out of touch.



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Walker's silly useless stall on Obamacare

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

The first round of decisions will be made when this edition of Labor Press is at the printers, but Gov. Scott Walker has primed our state to pay a devastating political, financial and probably legal price for betting so hard that Mitt Romney would win and dismantle Obamacare.

Obamacare remains unsailable and the president's continued willingness for his administration to negotiate with states remains intact. But patience and legal niceties have their limits and Walker and his health law hating minions have put Wisconsin through an unconscionable and expensive wringer that reflects his continued incompetence as an administrator.

The story is emerging differently elsewhere (except for Florida, which also has a Republican governor unable to see his hand in front of his face, as the recent voter lines he caused demonstrate).

To date, only about 15 states and the District of Columbia have created the framework for

Official Notice

In a slight change from a previous announcement, United Steelworkers Local 2-209 will be holding a General Election on Wednesday, Jan. 16, 2013, for terms ending May 2015 for President, Vice-President, Financial Secretary, Recording Secretary, three (3) Trustees, Sergeant-At-Arms, Guide, and four (4) Bargaining Committee Representatives.

Elections will be held at the Harley-Davidson Pilgrim Rd. plant cafeteria 5-8 a.m., 10:35-10:55 a.m. and 2-5 p.m. Laid off members will be permitted in the cafeteria for the purpose of voting. Any questions, please call (414) 531-4845.

Andy Voelzke,
Recording Secretary

health insurance exchange through legislation or executive orders while three others have committed to running exchanges in partnership with the federal government. A number of Republican governors, including those in Arizona, Idaho, New Jersey, Virginia and Tennessee, had said they would decide after the election, leaving only a 10-day window before the deadline.

But most are now giving off signs of immediate negotiation after probably months of secret preparation. Not all GOP governors are as bad as Wisconsin's at reading the tea leaves.

"The Walker Administration is clearly in a bind because it does not want a federal exchange nor does it want a state exchange which meets minimum consumer protection standards," noted Robert Kraig, executive director of Citizen Action of Wisconsin and an acknowledged expert on health laws. He has done extensive investigation into the secret plans of the Walker administration and expects Walker to continue to duck and weave.

Walker bet on national conservative politics and Koch and Rove money double-time. First that the Supreme Court would overturn the Affordable Health Care - and it didn't. Then he bet on Romney's "day one" pledge to overturn Obamacare - though technically impossible.

As a result the Walker administration also delayed Wisconsin's role in "exchanges" -- national health care purchasing programs required in all states by the new established law. The purpose of such exchanges will be to open up the insurance market for consumers and force private health providers to establish good policies and rates or else lose to better



It was last summer, flanked by Assembly leaders Jon Richards and Sandy Pasch at a federal courthouse rally, that Robert Kraig hailed the Supreme Court legalization of Obamacare - a painful reminder of how long Walker actually had to get his Exchange act together.

competitors. Even those who wanted a public option or a single-payer plan recognized that the creation of such exchanges was a key to developing the best rates possible.

The Nov. 16 federal deadline to set up such mechanisms included millions of dollars in planning assistance - more federal financial help for Wisconsin that Walker again blew off. He did the same with the \$816 million to establish the state leg (Milwaukee to Madison) in the national train network. The price the state is paying for this governor's obstinacy to good business ideas is now becoming staggering. Talgo, the Spanish train

company, is suing the state for abandoning a related deal to buy two trains and support an Amtrak facility. His new economic commerce division has misplaced millions of public dollars. Now Walker has kicked away timely money to help citizens get less costly health care.

Wisconsin had hoped to have its own voice and ideas for these exchanges, but Walker's stubbornness suggests that the federal government must now set it up for Wisconsin. Walker will probably scream that this is federal intrusion in state business, ignoring he forced it. In fact, he could easily have been a partner.

Kraig found something else

in his investigation. Despite Walker's public position that the state would do no planning until after the election, internal documents obtained by Citizen Action of Wisconsin reveal that Walker's Health Services Secretary Dennis Smith had been told that Wisconsin could submit a blueprint for an exchange in time for the Nov. 16 deadline. Walker continues to deny that. But this suggests that substantial planning may have been taking place behind closed doors and without input from stakeholders, legislators, and the public.

Walker may take advantage of the federal government's willingness to negotiate into 2013 to submit an inadequate exchange plan, delaying action on health care exchanges. Warned Kraig, "Based on the record, our concern is that Walker will try to square the circle by submitting a plan for a substandard exchange which allows health insurers to sell inferior insurance. This could set up a showdown between Walker and federal authorities that could further delay planning for the implementation of health care reform."

If Kraig proves right, expect Walker to again blame the feds for problems he created. And the state could wind up with legal costs as well as heftier expenses in setting up exchanges.



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Sandy

From Page 1

remind the nation that working together works best, that things get done when all quarters pitch in regardless of labels?

It was no surprise here that the most prepared, trained and heroic responders and workers prepared to pitch in came from unions. Truly, almost everyone behaved well. But union workers had the advantage of attitude, drills, training by their locals and nationals as well as governmental units -- and experience in coping with human needs during natural disasters.

It was mainly union workers who had been long prepared to respond the best. Recall what happened in the final days of the Bush administration - without the advance warning and positioning of supplies and help allowed in the recent hurricane by those sophisticated government weather satellites - in the unexpected instantaneous "Miracle on the Hudson."

Every responder in the first 90 minutes who saved all the lives on the downed plane or efficiently led survivors to shelter in mid-winter were union workers - not just jet crews and ferry workers but dispatchers and law enforcement.

Again and again, recovery from the superstorm reflected union power. As estimates climb above \$50 billion in property damage alone, unions will continue to be a big part of the cleanup. As the unlikely coalition of two Democratic governors (Connecticut and New York), one Republican (New Jersey) and independent rich former Republican mayor (Bloomberg) press for funds to rebuild and improve infrastructure, and



From medical specialists and police wading through the flood waters with boats to rescue stranded residents to postal workers who kept timely mail delivery assured, dozens of unions excelled not just at doing their jobs in difficult circumstances but going beyond expectations for the victims of Hurricane Sandy.

probably press for more intelligent planning on upgrades in hardening cities to address climate change, union workers will grow in the equation.

Americans everywhere are pitching in with funds through the Red Cross and pressing their public officials to offer help, but most of the repairing and rebuilding will be done by talented and hardworking union members.

Many of the organizations dealing with Sandy's devastation emphasize the importance of union workers' expertise and skill, as well as of sufficient government financial support for rebuilding physical structures and roads and, in many cases, people's lives.

• Fire Fighters (IAFF) members were key in rescue efforts and fighting the many fires caused by the storm. Nearly one-third of IAFF's members live in Sandy's path, so many first responders who saved lives and property during the storm did so while their own families and

homes were in harm's way. They were in action nonstop, responding to an unprecedented volume of calls for assistance. Jersey City, for instance, reported averaging one emergency call per minute for 24 straight hours on Monday and Tuesday of the storm's arrival.

• AFSCME members helped with evacuations and are making sure that sanitation standards are upheld, providing emergency services and inspecting and repairing roads, bridges and tunnels to make sure they are safe.

They are still cleaning up debris and removing fallen trees after handling the high volume of 911 calls, serving lunches at shelters and facilitating paperwork quickly and efficiently. They will be the front-line as governments spring into further action from the necessary paper work to the hard rebuilding and refurbishing.

• Members of the Utility Workers (UWUA) were among the union members fixing power lines-both above and below



ground. But rushing in to help with the storm were union workers from all over the country, including IBEW and other professionals in electrical grids and repairs. Even units flown in from California on military planes to Long Island to help were union and union-trained professionals.

These workers also repaired the steam power system in lower Manhattan. They are still at it as of this publication, putting power lines and poles back up, clearing tree limbs off of power lines and examining water pumping stations to make sure water is clean and safe.

Ironically, UWUA members at Con Edison were locked out just three months ago but rather than reflecting lingering resentment - the sort of behavior you might expect from all those Republican ads - they showed their devotion to their communities, although some of them have lost their own homes. One worker lost a family member who died in the storm.

• National Nurses United

(NNU) members helped evacuate sick and injured people, made sure newborn babies and their mothers were safe and helped with the rash of injuries caused by Sandy. The first floor of the Veterans Affairs hospital in Manhattan was under six feet of water - but although the patients were evacuated safely, the nurses who worked there went temporarily without jobs. It was their union, the NNU, that worked to find jobs elsewhere.

• Members of the Transport Workers (TWU) were so fast and effective that the majority of New York's subway lines were back on track for limited service by the Thursday after the storm. It took longer in lower Manhattan, but the lines north of 34th Street were all in working order quickly and the subways were all back in 10 days. TWU members pumped millions of gallons of water out of the subway tunnels and had to walk every inch of the track and inspect the rails, signals and power hook-ups to make sure everything was working and safe. They also had to repair damaged elevators and escalators. And transit workers were pressed into managing large, chaotic crowds without any training in crowd management.

• Members of the Letter Carriers (NALC) kept delivering mail until the last possible moment the Monday of the storm and resumed service as soon as it was safe to be out on the roads again (in Washington, D.C., they delivered mail to homes Monday and Tuesday as the storm raged). Despite damage and delays, the US Postal Service says people didn't have to worry about their absentee ballots not getting in on time.

• Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) members worked with TWU, the New York Police Department and the transit authority to make the buses run in New York City again, starting within days of the storm, even while some roads were still overrun. People standing on street corners literally applauded when they saw the first busses coming to pick up passengers.

• Seafarers (SIU) members served as the crew on ships used to house responders summoned to New York City and then helped get harbor traffic moving again.

That is only the surface. Other unions deeply involved included the Railroad Signalmen (BRS), AFGE, Longshoremans (ILA), Ironworkers, Air Line Pilots (ALPA), Association of Flight Attendants-CWA (AFA-CWA), Laborers (LIUNA), United Transportation Union (UTU), the United Union of Roofers and Waterproofers, the International Union of Police Associations (IUPA) and the Communications Workers of America (CWA).

-- By Labor Press and AFL-CIO editors

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