



# NEWSLETTER OF THE MILWAUKEE AREA LABOR COUNCIL

April 14, 2023



*"During all of these attacks, Unions have showed up! Community showed up! Building and construction trades, industrial and manufacturing, service sector workers, and public sector workers showed up. Because that is what Democracy looks like!"*

-Kevin Gundlach, President of the South Central Federation of Labor  
Speech to the 2023 Wisconsin AFL-CIO Community Services Conference



Union Town.

We've seen all of the attacks on Labor in this Union Town, and all over this State. It's out of greed and a thirst for power: ACT 10, forced to work for Less, the Janus decision... they came after Project Labor Agreements, Labor Peace Agreements, Prevailing Wage.

Epic Systems vs. Lewis came after non-union workers; a ruling that says workers can't file class action lawsuits when it comes to wage theft. Wage Theft. When workers don't get paid what they are legally owed. Think about that. It's not even a criminal case.

So a worker steals a dollar out of the till or takes a soda without paying for it and it's a criminal offense, but a rich CEO doesn't pay their workers thousands of dollars legally owed, and it's a civil offense. Not only that, but this opened up a can of worms. Multi-billionaire dollar owners like the Koch brothers started looking into whether they could prevent class action lawsuits from workers when it came to discrimination and harassment.

It's clear, workers' Rights have been under attack.

**When Workers rights are under attack! What do we do?  
WE FIGHT BACK!**

And have Unions fought back! Unprecedented: workers joining unions.

**Organizing:**

- SEIU Nurses at UW Health
- Workers United at Starbucks
- CWA at Raven Activision and Noble Knight Games
- IBEW at For Our Future and Colectivo Coffee
- IUPAT at Crushin' it Apparel

**SOLIDARITY** Sisters and Brothers!

We are in a Union Hotel: Workers United Local 66 and IATSE Local 251.

On behalf of the South Central Federation of Labor, I'm proud to welcome you to Madison, WI our State Capitol and a

UFCW at Madison Sourdough bakery

We just received another organizing lead here in Madison this morning!

**Fightback campaigns, Strike, and Direct Actions:**

- OPEIU at CUNA Mutual Group
- AFSCME at the Red Cross
- SMART at Trachte STRIKE
- SEIU at Oakwood

But it's also happening throughout the State, where unions are coming together through their Central Labor Councils and the WI AFL-CIO assisting organizing drives:

The Machinists who organized the Milwaukee Art Museum.

In Racine, UAW members were on STRIKE.

The Portage County Central Labor Council also assisted Workers United in organizing Starbucks workers in Plover.

Eau Claire: The Western Wisconsin CLC assisted Pablo hotel and maintenance staff organized with IBEW 953.

The Greater Green Bay Area Labor Council members joined other community partners to ensure GB had extended voting hours, so workers have more opportunities to vote in person. And now, many of us are here together, to fight together. To show those billionaire owners, those CEOs, and those politicians beholden to them. That together we have power.

**When I say UNION, you say POWER. UNION. POWER!  
Union! POWER.**

**THANK YOU, and together, let's continue to fight for  
UNION POWER!!**

Our power is magnified when we build relationships within our shared Communities. And a large part of that is within our Community Services:

Central Labor Councils: hosting LaborFest on Labor Day throughout the State of Wisconsin.

Workers Memorial Day: honoring our Sisters and Brothers who never made it home, and fighting for those who did.

Unions host Take Kids Fishing Day.

Union Sportsmen's Alliance projects throughout the State have provided access to natural areas for the differently abled, boardwalks and fishing piers, and habitat for endangered and threatened species.

Unions are helping those who are less fortunate, who are struggling, who have too often been left behind: donations to food pantries, from places like Dodge County providing donations locally to the National NALC Food Drive, which will be held this Spring.

Community Services Committees and United Way Liaisons take the lead with displaced workers program to assist workers, Health Connect to provide affordable healthcare, and even providing books through the Dolly Parton imagination library,

And what else do we do as Unions for our community: provide information on voting rights.

That's right, our Elections: and this is the election of our time. The State Supreme Court.

Just a few years ago, Republicans and their donors were meeting privately calling it an "Election Integrity Round Table". The goal was to deny the election, gerrymander the State even more than it is now, and make it more difficult for workers to be able to vote or have their voted counted. Integrity Round Table?

Integrity? You know, integrity is the quality of being honest. It's about strong, ethical principles. How is this principled when these rich donors and their Republican cronies have meetings about Democracy and then close it to the public as well as to the press.

Of course, it was never about Integrity, just like Right to Work was never about Rights and never about Good Work. It was to strategize how to suppress the vote. And it was about holding onto unbridled, unfettered POWER.

We know they've Gerrymandered the maps in their favor.

We know they've created campaign finance laws to favor corporations and billionaires---in their favor.

We know they've used divisive politics over and over and over again to 'divide & conquer' ---in their favor.

We know how they obfuscate the truth, change the meanings of rights-based language (like using the word freedom, right to work, and integrity, and I recently heard them using the words social justice) ---all in their favor.

But that wasn't enough. They planned on training people to harass working class voters at the polls; to intimidate our grandparents and our children from voting at the polls.

This is vile. It's fucking disgusting.

### **What's Disgusting? UNION BUSTING!**

The only way Republicans think they can win is not by counting all of the votes.

It's not by drawing fair maps.

And it's certainly not by encouraging people to vote.

It's by intimidating, dividing, misleading, cheating.

A little over 12 years ago, in the Capitol rotunda, workers were fighting for our rights. The anti-worker Republican Governor and Legislature passed ACT 10, which stripped away our freedoms to collectively bargain as public sector workers. This was an attack on nurses and doctors, therapists and social workers, nursing assistants and food service workers, teachers and daycare workers, electricians and plumbers, maintenance and janitors. It was an attack on a major pillar of our democracy.

To many in Wisconsin, this was the first major attack in decades on our democratic rights—and it started at the workplace. Those responsible for such attacks said they wouldn't do the same to the private sector workers, but they lied. Within 5 years, they passed Coerced and Forced to Work for Less legislation, and then they went after Prevailing Wage. The result? Lower wages for all workers, Less benefits for all workers, a weakened voice in the workplace for all workers, and unsafe working conditions for all workers.

These same politicians who attacked workers like to say they stand for Local Governments to have the freedom to control their own local affairs. But then the bad actors continued their attacks on Unions, going after Labor Peace Agreements and Project Labor Agreements, preventing local government to do what was best for workers: again, more attacks on workers.

But this was just the beginning. They continued to attack and exploit immigrant workers, black and brown workers, rural workers, indigenous workers, and LGBTQ workers; many of whom were already low wage workers.

The divide and conquer attacks on the working class just keep coming. And with organized, unionized workers weakened, the wealthy got wealthier, and the poor poorer.

When Labor and our allies appealed to the anti-worker State Supreme Court, all in the name of justice, freedom, privacy, and equality: they refused to do anything about it.

And now, most recently, more attacks on our Freedoms and our Rights: we see archaic and cruel Abortion Laws which is a direct attack on workers. Let's make this clear: Reproductive Rights are Workers Rights. Immigrant Rights are Workers Rights. LGBTQ Rights are Workers Rights. Racial Justice is all about Labor Justice.

So what we can we do about it? First, we can join Unions. We know when workers join unions, we have a more progressive State, and a more progressive Country. It's a fact: High Union Density States and Countries have rights that are protected because when more workers have power, social and economic justice is attained.

Second, for those who are in Unions and have the right to bargain or the ability to 'meet and confer', bargain protections and benefits in relation to Reproductive Freedom and so many other rights mentioned. This means including language that ensures health insurance covers abortion, that personal leave is available, and we can defend health professionals and our own members in court.

And Finally, we need to VOTE.

Bargaining issues that matter to workers: we need to do. Direct Actions, Strikes, and Organizing workers and communities is imperative, we need to do. But we need to do more. A State Supreme Court can honor workers' rights and reverse ACT 10.

Our State Supreme Court can reveal how gerrymandering has compromised our elections. A State where 65% of the legislature is Republican while receiving 48% of the vote.

And Our Supreme Court can make a ruling on the attacks on all of the listeners who are part of the Working Class.

ACT 10: It took away our rights. It took away the ability for us to do our jobs. And for nurses, that includes saving lives.

They accomplished this because unions are organizing, they are building power in their workplaces. Unions are Democracy!

During all of these attacks, Unions have showed up! Community showed up! Building and construction trades, industrial and manufacturing, service sector workers, and public sector workers showed up. Because that is what Democracy looks like!

**Show me what Democracy looks like! This is what  
Democracy looks like!**