



Political hopefuls crowd around MALC VP Annie Wacker to sign up for a in-depth session on labor issues January 29.

## COPE tests candidates

For a second election cycle, the Milwaukee Area Labor Council made it mandatory for candidates in the spring elections to attend a January 29 working session on issues of importance to unions and working families -- a first step in receiving council backing.

A remarkable number of local candidates - 35 people running for various judicial positions, school boards, suburban aldermanic seats and related positions - turned up at Yatchak Hall next to the labor council offices at 633 S. Hawley Rd. Regardless of ideology, they seemed genuinely concerned people, out to serve their communities rather than just feed at the public trough (for most, there was no pay or less pay). They were willing to learn about the issues and even subject their personal lives to scrutiny.

It would be nice to pretend all these candidates need union

support to win. But there were a mixture of reasons for this high interest and turnout in a historically low turnout spring election (April 7).

Some, of course, were looking for that sort of victory push in volunteers and money from the Committee on Political Education (COPE) and council delegates, representing some 55,000 members and partners in the three counties of Milwaukee, Ozaukee and Washington.

MALC leaders had openly explained why attendance was

vital to get any February interview or endorsement, citing examples in the past of candidates who pretended to support labor's key issues and fumbled when faced with a situation in office. Blanket support may never be possible, but basic understanding seems a minimal request. And running on labor support and then abandoning it has become a particular no-no.

But it would also be naïve to assume that union support was essential to all of the candidates

**COPE** continued Page 7

## Walker's follies force state to step in

By Dominique Paul Noth  
Editor, Labor Press

The state put Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker across its knees February 3 and gave him an administrative spanking for obduracy and incompetence.

### Analysis

That in effect was the consequence of years of warnings about managerial errors and understaffing. Facing legal liability it directly traces to Walker's ineffectiveness, the state finally acted by taking administrative control and choice of managers away from Walker in child care, food share (food stamps) and medical (Medicaid) handling, some of these services centered at the troubled, understaffed county call center.

The choice of administration and managers for these information safety nets will now be made by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services under Secretary Karen Timberlake. But the county's experienced AFSCME workforce will remain and return to full staffing in a novel "hybrid" model that also continues the current revenue model (\$24.2 million, with county taxpayers kicking in \$3.5 million while federal funds account for more than \$12 million and state funds \$8.5 million).

Supervisors, while recogniz-

## Desperate delays

### Free Choice the target of GOP senators' petty torture

By Dominique Paul Noth  
Editor, Labor Press

It doesn't rise to the level of "our national nightmare is over" (Ford pardoning Nixon) but it did take months to free an Obama cabinet appointment from the GOP's feeble Guantanamo quarantine, imposed by a dying herd of last-term senators.

Hers was actually a late cab-

inet appointment by the new president, just before Christmas, yet it was put on a fast track for Senate confirmation hearings (January 9) partly because the D.C. air was all fuzzy and warmed by promises of cooperation.

The new administration had not yet beaten its head against the old habits and strong-arm heritage of the GOP mastodons. It was still engaged in a belief in civility and compromise, that all sides would listen to their own experts and engage in economic urgency.

It did not quite expect there would still be believers in the failures of the last eight years -- not many to be sure, but enough to scramble for a political advantage rather than moving forward. As several pundits noted, it may have been from the GOP that Lucy learned to pull the football away from Charlie Brown at the last minute.

The president's perseverance in the face of likely failure could be deeply admired, but many Democrats - and not all



Why Hilda Solis, expected to sail in as labor secretary, endured legislative limbo instead.

from the left -- knew this GOP Lucy from history. To them Obama's efforts were noble and correct, but still like fingernails on a blackboard.

This was the scratchiest fingernail for the labor community because, despite assurances, the "broad approval" lingered past even this newspaper's deadlines.

Certainly they stretched beyond the Senate recess to Feb. 24 (at last reports) and imposed a 60-vote threshold to spring her

**Delays** continued Page 10

## Celebrate our 50th!

Fifty years of organizing workplaces to create one of America's major "Union Cities" - retaining a higher percentage of union workers than the national average.

Fifty years of setting standards for wages, training and safety, raising Milwaukee's work ethic and helping the community recover again and again from economic hard times. (And working to do it again!)

Fifty years of policies and protests to develop jobs, opportunities, community services, and charitable giving at home along with the workplace to lift up people in need.

Fifty years of fighting destructive ideas that diminish the importance, buying power and pride of working families.

Fifty years of educating and confronting political leaders to create effective public policies and legislation.

These are the 50 years of accomplishment and influence being celebrated in 2009 by the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, AFL-CIO. A range of activities and events are planned -- culminating with a broader bigger Laborfest on Labor Day (Monday, September 7).

But congratulations and recognition can be extended right now by organized labor's friends and members through a special **50th Anniversary Commemorative Souvenir and Resource Book**. Timed to be available in early summer, this souvenir booklet

**Souvenir** continued Page 12



Walker's budget cuts and managerial failures have led to multiple protests such as this one at the Courthouse last fall and have now forced the state government to intervene.

ing in an outpouring of public statements that Walker caused the state action, were nevertheless miffed that the state bypassed the County Board to solve the problem.

The board quickly held a series of votes to restore the funding Walker had denied and

many expressed a fear that the state would keep what they felt should remain a local function - "first responders for the poor and sick," as one put it.

But that hybrid management model could also be interpreted as a sign. The state took away

**Walker** continued Page 8

# Unions grow for 2nd year

Union membership in the United States enjoyed a second straight year of growth in 2008 - even as the state of the economy strengthened the reasons to join a union.

It was a year in which companies shed jobs to stay afloat. It was a credit-poor, expansion-resistant environment rife with bad management decisions and a slow realization in the business community of just how blind they had been in the last eight years. Yet unions grew - modestly but trending higher, partly because of the unique possibilities they provided business.

An analysis of reports from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics reveals that union membership increased by

428,000 workers, reaching 16.1 million members in 2008. The union workforce grew to 12.4% of workers nationally - and while government sector workers still represented the bulk of existing and new union jobs (36.8% of such workers), private sector union workers also grew to 7.8%.

Once again, Wisconsin did far better than the national average. About 15% of its workers were union members in 2008 (up from 14.3% in 2007) but actually 16% of Wisconsin workers were represented by unions whether they were full paying dues members or not.

The reasons for union membership also spring out of the statistics.

In 2008, median weekly pay for union members was \$886 compared with \$691 for those who were not represented by unions.

The worse the economy gets, the stronger becomes the case for union pay and productivity. Union workers' job security remains strong in these difficult times.

Workers in union are much more likely to have health care benefits and a pension -- often the sink or swim difference today, adding to the general reality that union members make 28% more than workers who

don't have a union, the government statistics show.

Further undercutting the current high-spending promotional blitz against unions paid for by chamber of commerce type organizations, the statistics bear out a key short term advantage:

Union members are better suited to handle the recession because they have mechanisms in place to work with their employers to cut wages and benefits instead of cutting jobs.

Analyzing the data, the AFL-CIO concluded that "The growth shows what we already know - - that people want to join unions, but simply don't have the freedom in a large-scale way."

Of the increase in union membership, only a small percentage came from workers forming unions through the company-dominated NLRB process. Only 70,000 workers were able to form a union through the board in 2007, for example.

On the other hand, sixty million workers would join a union today if they could, polls confirm. Yet too few ever get the chance because of the corporate obstacles put in place to keep workers from exercising their freedom

These realities underscore the push for the Employee Free Choice Act.

# Machinists' gala night



**TOP:** Several hundred people joined District 10 as it honored incoming and outgoing officers of affiliated lodges at an induction dinner January 24 at the Wyndham Hotel. National leaders of the machinists attended the event, including (from left) General Vice President Richard Michalski, IAMAW International President R. Thomas Buffenbarger and District 10 Director Michael Hornby. Not pictured at the table was IAM Midwest Territory General Vice President Philip J. Gruber.

**BOTTOM:** Spotted in the packed house were members of Lodge 66, several of whom are helping displaced workers at the HIRE Center. Shown at left is Helen Gadowski, wife of the local's retired president, Tom Gadowski. The HIRE stalwarts are Bunny Browning (center) and Patricia Elizondo.



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Editorial and Business Office  
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Telephone (414) 771-7070 FAX (414) 771-0509  
E-mail: dom@milwaukeeelabor.org


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# Officials told: Be My Free Choice Valentine



Parents and some of their kids posed (above) at the end of a Valentine's Day party February 7, and displayed some of the results of an afternoon of cutting, pasting and making hearts. The Valentines were headed for Wisconsin elected officials, Senators Russ Feingold and Herb Kohl and Rep. Gwen Moore, to thank them for supporting the Employee Free Choice Act. Taking some photos to post on AFL-CIO blogs was Sara Wallenfang, state AFL-CIO field communications coordinator.


LEFT: Secretary-Treasurer Sheila Cochran (top) was only one of the adults helping children set up the colored paper and pencils. Spotted in the crowd was Pamela Fendt and families from the Good Jobs and Livable Neighborhoods Coalition. Judicial candidate Ellen Brostrom brought her daughter. Families from such unions as the CWA and the IMAW were also helping out, including from Lodge 66 the Angiolo family (children's Chelsie and Kaylie, parents Todd and Bonnie). Pizza was served the families who arrived all Saturday afternoon.



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# Paid sick days draw applause by economists

By Marc Levine  
and Michael Rosen  
Special to Labor Press

As academic researchers on economic development and workplace productivity, we applaud Milwaukee's new guarantee of paid sick days. Experience and research have shown this to be a sound economic development measure.

Milwaukee has the seventh-highest poverty rate in the nation, a 51% African-American male jobless rate and the largest racial disparities in unemployment and poverty in the country. Forty-three percent of the city's workers earn less than \$20,000 a year, and many are among the 122,230 Milwaukeeans (47% of the private work force) who do not have paid sick days.



Marc Levine

Everyone agrees Milwaukee needs more family-supporting jobs. Yet employment that lacks paid sick days forces employees to choose between their jobs and caring for their families -- this is not a family-supporting job.

The lack of paid sick days hampers economic development



Michael Rosen

in Milwaukee in myriad ways:

- It costs workers job stability; employees who become too ill to work or who take off to care for a sick child or parent are frequently fired.

- It costs companies in stability and productivity, turnover, training and absenteeism and in health care expenses.

- It contributes to

Milwaukee's high rates of student absenteeism as older siblings stay home to care for sick younger siblings because their parents are denied that right.

- It creates public health risks, forcing employees with contagious illnesses to put co-workers and customers at risk.

Opponents say requiring paid sick days is a worthy objective but not economically viable. Some have invoked the recession as a reason to oppose it.

But these opponents offer the same discredited methodology and arguments that low-road employers have used historically in opposing child labor laws, minimum wage, workers compensation, clean air regulations

**Editor's Note:** Three judges recused themselves before a fourth was found to issue a temporary injunction delaying the city's sick leave ordinance. The city attorney refused to fight for what 67% of the voting public supported. These voters didn't "think things through," claims the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce. Apparently their wiser choice in the same election would have been McCain, not Obama. But as business acumen collapses into ruin, MMAC can only spread its hysteria into the suburbs. Just what are the economic facts? And is the MMAC once again missing an opportunity to lift the city up? Two noted experts on the local economy have now weighed in.

and virtually every other labor standard this nation has adopted. Each time the opposition characterized the new labor or community standard as a job killer. And after each standard was established, the business community adapted, the economy grew and our country, its workers and their families were better for it.

In the 1990s, business lobbyists used a similar argument to oppose raising the minimum wage. But after states and even cities raised wages above the national minimum, economists found the Chicken Little scenarios did not occur: Incremental increases did not increase unemployment or cause minimum wage-paying firms to lay people off. Those state and local victories paved the way for advances on the national level.

Facing similar dire warnings, San Francisco enacted a paid sick leave ordinance in 2007. However, despite an economic downturn affecting all counties in the Bay Area, San Francisco maintained a competitive job growth rate that exceeded the average rate of nearby counties.

Of the 20 most competitive

economies, only the United States does not guarantee its workers paid sick days.

In a world in which 2 billion people live on less than \$2 a day, Milwaukee will not succeed by trying to get poor. The only way Milwaukee can thrive is by getting smart - competing with high-skill, high-productivity, high-wage employees.

Opponents of the sick leave initiative, such as the MMAC, point out that many of their members already provide paid sick leave. These members should welcome higher standards for all employers, which would protect against unfair competition from businesses without standards and would prevent a destructive race to the bottom.

Providing all Milwaukee workers with paid sick days is the right thing to do. It's also the smart thing to do. Firms that treat their employees humanely benefit from increased commitment, inventiveness and productivity -- the keys to competing in an increasingly competitive global economy.

*The authors offered this as an opinion piece to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, which published it January 22. Levine is a professor of economic development and urban studies at UWM. Rosen is teacher of economics at MATC, an appointee to the state's technical college board and president of the MATC teachers union, Local 212, American Federation of Teachers.*

## WisCOSH on the move

It's not that WisCOSH is in a rut - not after hosting the nationwide COSH conference in Milwaukee. But 20 plus years at the same place can get a bit wearing.

So the Wisconsin Committee on Occupational Safety & Health moved at the end of 2008. And they returned to the near South Side where they started more than three decades ago.

The new offices are at 1023 S. 5th St., which is next door to Voces de la Frontera Worker Center.

This will be WisCOSH's new training center. It will be the center of educational, health-related and technical services. Most of WisCOSH's classes are free. Visit [www.wiscosh.org](http://www.wiscosh.org) or call (414) 933-2338.



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# Unblame blue collars

## Conventional wisdom proves wrong again

In the rapid decline of the US manufacturing sector, many commentators have seized on a convenient whipping boy: a greedy blue-collar workforce that has, as the story goes, used its unionized strength to extort such unreasonably high wages and benefits that employers are unable to compete in either the domestic or the world marketplace.

The most glaring recent example of this fabricated whipping boy surfaced with the US automakers' financial woes - which, incidentally, are being matched or surpassed by foreign automakers' woes.

Of course Detroit is in trouble, the argument went, because they're forced to pay assembly line workers \$70 an hour. Even after that \$70-per-hour figure was exposed as fictional, the idea that workers are being overpaid and are to blame for the decline of US manufacturing has nevertheless persisted, taking on the patina of conventional wisdom.

But a report issued February 13 by the Economic Policy Institute concludes the real villains are totally different and the so-called villains painted in the media may actually be the heroes and the salvation for manufacturing. Examining the forces at play, the report sorts out their roles in the shrinking manufacturing sector and concludes that the facts are sharply at odds with this convenient (for some) but inaccurate conventional wisdom.

Economist Josh Bivens lays out the facts in "Squandering the Blue-Collar Advantage," which shows that US manufacturing's blue-collar workforce, far from destroying US competitiveness, is actually one of the key ele-

ments making a positive contribution -- a contribution that is being undermined by a variety of other factors.

*The report is available on the Take Action section of milwaukeeelabor.org, the council's website, as well as at the Economic Policy Institute, epi.org.*

It is eye-opening reading. "If the story of US manufacturing began and ended with its blue-collar workers, the outcome would be far different from what we're seeing today," said Bivens. "In hourly pay and productivity, US manufacturing workers give their companies a significant competitive edge - one that is being drained away by other negative forces."

Bivens identifies three key factors that are undermining US competitiveness:

The single most damaging factor is the grossly overvalued US dollar, which artificially drives up the price of US goods abroad and drives down the cost of foreign-produced goods here.

Over the past ten years, this imbalance alone has created a 10-16% cost disadvantage for US goods, compared to the previous decade.

The high cost of US health care is another significant negative. The US would even gain advantage over comparable trading partners if it brought our health costs in line.

Perhaps more revealing is a factor most Americans would not have believed until they saw the behavior of businesses that resulted in the current recession: US managers are overpaid. In fact, if wages claimed by managerial and supervisory hires in the US were brought in line - median average - with those of the comparable countries that are our major trading partners,

the result would be a 6.4% cost advantage for US manufacturers.

"If we want to restore the strength in our economy and in the world, we have to address the real anti-competitive factors that are dragging manufacturing down," Bivens concluded, borne out by the analysis and statistics in his report.

"In this effort, the wages and productivity of the unionized blue-collar workforce are an important asset."

@ Economic Policy Institute

## Free hearing exam

WisCOSH will be hosting a free hearing exam at its new offices at 1023 S. 5th St., which is next door to Voces de la Frontera Worker Center. The free exams are conducted from 1 to 6 p.m. Saturday, February 28.

The purpose is to help those who may have had their hearing damaged in foundries, factories, warehouses or at construction sites. Under Wisconsin's Worker's Compensation, you may be eligible for hearing aids as well as compensation. You must have left the noisy work environment to qualify.

For more information please visit WisCOSH's website at [www.wiscosh.org](http://www.wiscosh.org) or call (414) 933-2338.

## Official Notices

The local famous over the years for representing workers at Briggs & Stratton and Strattec will hold nominations and elections for many of its officers in March.

Now known as United Steelworkers Local 2-232, the local will hold nominations as part of its 9:30 a.m. membership meeting Sunday, March 1, at Frank Monreal's El Matador, 9155 W. Bluemound Rd., Milwaukee, WI.

Primary elections (if needed) will be held at the plant and at union offices, 8500 W. Capitol Drive, on Friday, March 13, and the general election will also be at these locations on Friday March 20th.

Positions for which nominations are sought are Recording Secretary, Trustee at Large, Strattec Grievance Rep, Briggs Grievance Rep and two Briggs Bargaining Committee members.

Ralph E. Schwieger  
Financial Secretary Treasurer

USW Local 1114, historically known as the Harnischfeger unit, now Joy Global and related workers, will nominate officers and grievance/bargaining committee members as part of its regular membership meeting at 10 a.m. Sunday, March 8.

The events will be held at the local's union hall, 4621 W. National Ave.

Jim McIntosh  
Local 1114 President

The CWA National Convention will be held in Washington, D.C., June 22-23. Nominations for attendees from Local 4603 will be held at the local's membership meeting, 7:30 to 9 p.m. Friday, March 20, at the Midway Hotel, 1005 S. Moorland Rd., Brookfield.

Nominations from the floor will be accepted from members in good standing and candidates must accept by the conclusion of nominations.

Alisa Brown, Election Commission Chair

AFL-CIO Local 82, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Employees Union state convention delegates and for one Trustee position at the Tuesday, April 14, membership meeting, held 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., in Room 191 of the Student Union. Contested elections will be held at the May 12 membership meeting. Be sure to bring verification of union membership.

Cecilia Lewandowski  
Secretary

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# Delegates abuzz with votes, endorsements

In large numbers the candidates for public office who attended the January education session accepted the requirements and signed up for interviews February 2-3 with COPE (Committee on Political Education, representing all the council's member unions).

These were candidates for judicial seats, school boards and aldermanic-style offices, representing suburbs in three counties (Milwaukee, Washington and Ozaukee) and both Milwaukee County wide and city wide contests.

COPE interviewed hopefuls but then sat out several February 17 primary races, which may be revisited before the April 7 general election.

But even with the many interviews those races represented, there were still plenty more candidates who were supported.

All those recommended by COPE were endorsed February 4 by the delegates of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council.

And that was a busy and crowded delegate meeting since nominations were also being taken for an expanded executive board of the council as well as council officers. Locals were also being encouraged to make sure their per-capita payments were up to date.

After a long round of nominations, followed by letters of acceptance and a few withdrawals, council monitors wound up with the exact number of qualified nominees to match the number of open seats (though one seat was held in abeyance - it requires a candidate from an Ozaukee or Washington local).

The exact results will turn the March meeting into an act of



Brostrom

acclamation for a new board, though the outgoing board remains in office until oaths of office in April.

The existing officers of the MALC were elected by acclamation at the February delegate meeting since all were unopposed. They are part time officers President Willie D. Ellis and Vice-President Annie Wacker and full time Secretary-Treasurer and Chief Operating Officer Sheila D. Cochran. They will be sworn in with the new board members at the April delegate meetings.

Turning to the candidates for public office:

COPE passed over the primary in a Milwaukee County Circuit Court three-way race



Lipscomb

(Branch 15), which came down to J.D. Watts and Dan Gabler.

In the other open-seat Circuit Court contest (Branch 6), COPE offered dual recommendations for the April 7 final: **Ellen Brostrom and Chris Lipscomb.**

**Milwaukee School Board:**

No Feb. 17 recommendations were made in District 7, where firefighter David Voeltner and Donna Peck survived, and District 4 where Michael Mathias and Annie Woodward survived.

The races involve the seats held by Danny Goldberg, who decided not to run, and Charlene Hardin, whose write-in campaign made hardly a dent.

The council happily endorsed two candidates for the



Miller



Blewett

**More photos Page 12**

other Milwaukee School Board races: In District 5, where he is running unopposed once Jennifer Morales decided not to run, a former MPS teacher and administrator, **Larry Miller**, was strongly endorsed.

In District 6, there will be a tough April 7 race but also a crystal clear choice for labor. The delegates voted to return **Peter Blewett**, now the incumbent board chairman and strong fighter for better resources and reformed state funding, to the MPS board.

In suburban races Feb. 17, two COPE candidates advanced: JoAnn Shaw for the Nicolet School Board and Vicky Cassista for Oak Creek (District 1) alderperson.

For the April 7 election, the delegates approved the following endorsements:

**Rick Moze**, one of four can-

didates for two seats on the Greenfield School Board.

**Donald Almquist** for Greenfield alderman.

**Scott Wales**, running unopposed for Fox Point Municipal Judge.

**Zach Wisniewski** for South Milwaukee School Board.

**Erik Brooks** for South Milwaukee (District 4) Alderman.

**John Stalewski** for West Milwaukee Village Board.

**Nick Dobberstein** running unopposed for West Bend Alderman.

**Richard Foster** running unopposed for Whitefish Bay Village Trustee.

Statewide the race for superintendent of schools will pit the state AFL-CIO endorsed Tony Evers against the apparent choice of rightwing radio, Rose Fernandez.



Almquist



Dobberstein



Foster

## More on privatization

Among the scams developed by folks after your money in this economic recession are a number of ideas for states about how to reduce their spending by letting private firms take over everything from computerized databases to highway and bridge operations and even construction.

These schemes, as the Wall Street Journal reported, promise reduced outlays now or big returns later through privatized toll roads and the like - and they are all the fashion these days as states seek quick fixes for their huge deficits and falling tax returns.

All of which ties into the sort of tempting false promises (followed by surprise big expenditures for governments) that AFSCME's Richard Abelson discussed in his January 29 presentation to candidates. See opposite page and county story on Page 8.

But the Wall Street Journal was also confronted in its view by a notable op-ed piece from Thomas Frank, the celebrated author and debunker of economic myths in such books as *One Market Under God* (2000), *What's the Matter With Kansas?* (2004) and the current investigation of conservative governance, *The Wrecking Crew*.

Frank told the Wall Street Journal readers there's "there's good reason to be reluctant to privatize." Among his views:

"It doesn't take an MBA to figure out that we didn't build our interstate highways in order to create opportunities for venture capitalists. The purpose was public service.

"Transferring them to the private sector, at the very least, complicates this mission. At worst it will effectively close those roads to the part of the population that can't afford the revolutionary tolls that private ownership will surely bring.

"The cost of, well, just about everything, will start to rise as more pieces of the transportation system embrace their for-profit destiny and start charging whatever the desperate commuter will bear. Wear and tear on the remaining public-sector roads will certainly increase as traffic is driven off the tollways."

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## COPE

From Page 1

who attended. Some carried a philosophy that honestly differed, yet they want unions to take an honest look at them.

Some candidates are running in suburbs where there is not a density of union membership to make a big difference, an issue not true in the countywide judicial races and citywide school seats.

But a stroll around the meeting room revealed that the current economic crisis also had a lot to do with the high attendance. Everyone is struggling to cope, to understand how we got into this mess, and how best to marry quick stimulus and long-term improvement. The desire for answers is now falling on suburban trustees, school boards and village leaders.

These candidates had noticed something else -- that the unions have been the oracles of this disaster for years.

It was unions railing and rallying about the consequence of low wages at home while jobs were outsourced to even cheaper labor, about the danger of stifling the most productive workforce in the world while limiting largesse to the top 1%, about how the consumer confidence that had kept the economy afloat for eight years was doomed by policies that neglected the poor and the middle class.

None of this meant the candidates were automatically endeared of the union solutions, but being the "voice in the wilderness" certainly got their attention. And several candidates suggested the communities had been too cavalier and now needed to look deeper at what was going on.

Hearing the union presentations at this meeting brought a range of reactions from candidates -- disbelief, surprise and even anger that average workers were being denied basic rights and protections they assumed were part of the American way.

So this was an eye-opener.

Linda Gaston-Mounger, assistant executive director of the teachers' union (MTEA), explained why the state's school funding formulas were indeed a game that candidates for local offices and school boards had to be aware of. She outlined some myths about teacher pay and



Candidates take notes on the privatization issue during the COPE education session. For more, see Page 8.

benefits, and detailed how school boards were being eaten alive by health costs and uneven taxation.

Steve Bako, secretary-treasurer of Laborers Local 113, pulled no punches on why prevailing wage was the key issue for the building trades unions. To quickly outline for the uninitiated (and many candidates there certainly fit that bill), Bako gave a primer:

Prevailing wage is the geographical median paid to just over 50% for a specialty or skill, including benefits and expected training and standards. Under the Davis-Bacon act introduced in the 1930s by Republicans in Congress (who were concerned about outside workers undermining local economies) it is applied to federal projects and, as so-called "little Bacon-Davis rules," in states like Wisconsin to other governmental projects.

But prevailing wage is based on what is common in private industry as determined by government experts. What startled the candidates was how, without government controls, private companies tended to sneak in substandard wages or imported workers from other states to increase their profits or prevent objections to cheap material. All that, and case laws are full of examples, Bako pointed out, force down a region's prevailing wage and undermine local families, both union and non-union.

It is local officials, Bako pointed out to the candidates, who have to be aware of the rules and make sure the tricks aren't landing in their backyard.

Richard Abelson, executive director of AFSCME District Council 48, whose workers are

the core of both Milwaukee county and city service (see related story on Page 8), got the most laughs and the most moments of sad recognition as he exposed the supposed benefits of private delivery of public services.

Savings for the taxpayer have certainly proved elusive and Abelson had it down chapter and verse, noting with a touch of sarcasm how seldom the media reports on the real cost of such gimmicks.

His examples explored how specific projects had backfired in the taxpayer's face.

The costly consequence and continued executive padding of one of Milwaukee's most famous private-public partnerships -- the

Milwaukee Public Museum -- have carried a cultural treasure near to disaster and lost Milwaukee some of its most capable union workers.

Milwaukee's water service was another case of repairs the taxpayers had to pay for even as it supposedly separated basic operations from government control. All of which, as one candidate pointed out to Abelson, came after the taxpayers underwrote such huge expenses as the Deep Tunnel. "You got it" Abelson responded.

If Abelson caused the most humor, Sheila Cochran brought the most emotion. The MALC secretary-treasurer personalized the need for an Employee Free Choice Act with examples drawn from Milwaukee inner city workers who sought to organize their workplace and were actually undone by an apparently unknowing public official.

The AFL-CIO has worked for years to develop the Free Choice Act, Cochran explained, to return to the original idea of a simple majority choice at a workplace to form a union. It is now supported by the new president, the probable labor secretary and most members of Congress. It is high time, she said, for a level playing field to stop companies from hiding in the thickets of legal weaseling to prevent their workers from a voice in the future.

(Two candidates pulled me aside after the meeting to express their confusion. "I was taught in high school civics that organiz-

ing is a basic right," said one. Asked another, "The law as I was taught it must have changed." Well, it certainly did.

(In the decade after the Wagner Act was passed in the 1930s, many companies simply accepted majority choice in their workplaces. At the height of Cold War fears about the Communists and nuclear secrets in the late 1940s, the House Un-American Activities Committee and the seeds of the McCarthy era fanned a series of repressive regulations -- such as Taft-Hartley -- that encouraged companies to demand an NLRB supervised election for any effort to unionize a workplace. This led to a series of tactics and a billion dollar industry to prevent unions from gaining ground.)

The Employee Free Choice Act seeks to return balance to the workplace, Cochran noted. And she flatly indicated that COPE will "not support a candidate in opposition to Free Choice." And if that's where you stand, she told the guests, "Well, I thank you for your participation" -- but that's it.

The event was put together by Scott Redman, business representative for Plumbers Local 75, and Annie Wacker, vice-president of the labor council, both members of the MALC executive board. Eighty percent of the candidates at the educational session wound up signing on board for interviews with the full COPE.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

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# Walker

## From Page 1

from the county only what it felt it had to, and might give it all back with a more responsive county government.

Walker had been maneuvering for a full state takeover. He quickly labeled the state hybrid unworkable and blamed the service failures on the state's "inadequate funding."

Health Services' Timberlake sharply refuted Walker, detailing in a letter how the state had provided "more state funds and state staff assistance" to the county than it had to without seeing "sustained improvement."

Among her examples of Walker's "sustained inability to successfully provide services":

- The county had failed to process almost a third of benefit applications within the required time.
- While receiving hundreds of thousands of phone calls at its call center, it had been answering only 5% of those because positions were not filled and the skeleton staff was overwhelmed.
- Almost a third of the applications in 2007 were erroneously denied by the county, forcing expensive re-evaluation.

State officials also have to settle a federal class-action lawsuit accusing it and the county of shortchanging poor families of benefits even though it pleaded for months with Walker to address such concerns.

In these fast moving events, the state decision-makers also soothed supervisors' fears that the hybrid administration model will raise costs for county taxpayers.

Responding to questions from the Labor Press, a spokesman for Timberlake pledged full staffing of the call center when the state assumes management control July 1 - something that Walker had refused to do despite County Board votes.

Health Services' Seth Boffeli underlined how much more the state and fed do pay since county taxpayers provide about \$3.5 million while the feds contribute about \$12 million and the state the rest of the \$24.2 million.

Except for routine things like cost of living, he does not foresee the county taxpayers' portion of this going up and indicates that "as it has in the past, the state and feds will pay much more of the costs than the county does." He was addressing concerns in the press from county officials.

Health Services will need some language changes from the state legislature to accomplish the takeover, Boffeli noted, "but we don't anticipate that being a problem."

Underscoring the expected legislative support was Rep. Tamara Grigsby, chair of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families, who initially had hoped for some sort of county probation.

But detailing Walker's failures -- "It is horrifying that so many individuals go without food and medical support due to poor performance at the county level" -- she noted that "the success of the Milwaukee County Call Center will require serious commitment and difficult choices." Since Walker "cannot perform the services required . . . I fully support Governor Doyle's decision to take over those



Dealing with Scott Walker's approach to county government has given Richard Abelson, executive director of AFSCME District 48, ample examples of the high cost or privatization, which he shared with candidates for public office at the COPE education session. **BELOW:** In something of an irony for county politics, a rump recall movement targeting Walker has sprung up complete with signs.



administrative functions." AFSCME in Milwaukee estimates the changes will affect 250 of its union workers but the state says it is too early to pinpoint exact numbers in a takeover that will stretch through 2009. The workers will remain on the county books and in the county pension system.

To the supervisors' hopes that they could get Health Services to back off by demonstrating a competence that Walker and his chosen administrator, Corey Hoze, had not demonstrated to the state's satisfaction, Boffeli noted that the state is open to any "dramatic improvement."

Health Services also expects to choose managers from Milwaukee and welcomes County Board advice, he said. (The state's departments of administration as well as health services were involved in the discussions.)

Richard Abelson, executive director of AFSCME District Council 48, believes the state stepped back from seizing full control because it philosophically agreed that local workers and managers remained the best choice.

"Someday we may actually elect a county executive who cares about poor people and

understands good management," Abelson said, "and then it will be good that the state can use this hybrid model to return full operation of these services to the county."

"It becomes much more difficult if they simply took the whole thing over, as we saw in the child welfare situation."

Indeed, that full takeover from the county of child welfare is hardly a memorable model, as several supervisors have noted. But in fairness, the worst of that took place under a previous county executive, Tom Ament, whose managers overspent state money, and a previous County Board unwilling to go to bat with then- Gov. Tommy

Thompson to keep the trained county social workers from being disbanded.

Thompson chopped child welfare up, farmed it out to various private companies with religious or charitable names and allowed a revolving door of well meaning but unprepared staffers. It was the worst of Welfare to Work all over again. The operational confusion drove the system into lawsuits and even injuries and deaths. Today, too belatedly, it is all under new management.

State officials agree that those mistakes weighed heavily as they sought to protect the county's safety net services. It was a desire to avoid past failures, yet serve a thwarted, angry public, that led to the hybrid model. Many of the discussions, those involved say, centered on how to "stop the bleeding and fix things quickly."

Several supervisors privately believe that the state read and derailed Walker's master plan - which they describe as "deliberately disintegrating" county services to open the door to privateers and force the state and federal governments to pick up the pieces.

If that was the intention the game blew up in his face February 3.

Walker's supporters describe the state's action as political since he clearly wants to be the GOP candidate for governor against Doyle (most likely) in 2010. Others from both parties believe that Walker would be just the GOP candidate Doyle would like to face, given Milwaukee's reputation upstate and Walker's growing image of ineffectuality.

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# Steps up for labor in D.C.

## New NLRB chief already a fighter

For the last eight years, the persuasive pointed voice of dissent on the National Labor Relations Board was Wilma Liebman, sometimes the only Democrat on the Republican dominated Bush board.

But fortunes do change in Washington and now Obama has appointed her chair of the NLRB. Other majority choices (Democrats) will join her soon. But Liebman alone, who excoriated the GOP majority eloquently in many of her opinions, is already a choice signaling new vitality - even before the Employee Free Choice Act, which will rebalance labor law, reaches the Senate.



Liebman

With courtesy she thanked outgoing chairman Peter Schaumber for his collegiality (there were periods of time in 2008 when they were the only board members) but she clearly was looking ahead to returning the federal agency to its original purposes.

In thanking Obama for her nomination to chair the board, Liebman said, "The Board's work matters, just as it did when the National Labor Relations Act was passed in 1935. Democracy in the workplace is still basic to a democratic society, and collective bargaining is still basic to a fair economy. The statute we administer is the foundation of America's commitment to human rights recognized around the world."

Liebman was first appointed to the NLRB by President Clinton in 1997. (Her current term expires in 2011. Before joining the NLRB, she served

More stories on big gains and tough fights in D.C. on Pages 10 and 11.

from 1994 to 1997 at the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, first as special assistant to the director and then as deputy director. She began her legal career as an NLRB staff attorney in 1974, then served on the legal staff of two unions: the Bricklayers and the Teamsters.

A native of Philadelphia, Liebman holds a B.A. from Barnard College and a law degree from the George Washington University Law Center.

Other appointments were rumored but they could take place after Labor Press deadlines.

## Middle Class focus of new Task Force

On January 30 Obama announced the creation of the White House Task Force on Middle Class Working Families to develop and coordinate policies to rebuild the nation's middle class and lift up those in poverty.

Lending prestige to the Task Force was the choice of chairman, Vice-President Joe Biden. Lending teeth was the choice of executive director -- Biden's economic adviser who is a familiar name and face to Milwaukee unions and community organizers: Jared Bernstein, a 16-year veteran senior adviser from the Economic Policy Institute.

And lending the immediacy of stories and ideas was a new website -- [www.strongmiddle-class.gov](http://www.strongmiddle-class.gov) -- where workers can submit personal stories and ideas to help magnify both the work and the media coverage of the Task Force.

The Task Force's first official meeting will be on February 27, 2009, in Philadelphia. The topic of the first meeting will be:

"Green Jobs: A Pathway to a Strong Middle Class."

"Thank God that we have a president, vice president, and Congress who are determined to fix our economy so that it works for everyone," noted AFL-CIO President John Sweeney.

"The Task Force on Middle Class Working Families and the executive orders are the first step in a long road to restore balance between workers and corporations."

In remarks supporting the initiative, Biden saw unions as key components rebuilding the middle class, which he and the president called a "top economic priority."

On top of this immediate urgency, Biden said, "we have an important long-term task as well."

"Once this economy starts growing again, we need to make sure the benefits of that growth reach the people responsible for it.

"We can't stand by and watch as that narrow sliver of the top of the income scale wins a bigger piece of the pie -- while everyone else gets a smaller and smaller slice."

# Calendar

For updated master list of events, visit [www.milwaukeeelabor.org](http://www.milwaukeeelabor.org)

## Saturday, February 28

WisCOSH free hearing tests related to worker's comp  
Conducted 1-6 p.m.  
1023 S. 5th St

## Wednesday, March 4

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

## Saturday, March 21

Rally for Just Peace  
1 p.m., Milwaukee Courthouse  
Clas Park, 10th and Wells Sts.

## Wednesday, March 25

Executive Council Meeting  
2 p.m. Yatchak Hall  
633 S. Hawley Rd.

## Wednesday, April 1

Monthly Delegate Meeting  
Inauguration of Officers and Board  
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

# Bowling

## MALC MIXED SENIOR BOWLING

### JANUARY 2008 RESULTS

TEAM	WINS	LOSSES
CRAZY 8's	90	57
GUTTER RATS	76	71
PIN PALS	76	71
1 BOARD OVER	74	73
SLAMMERS	72	75
8 BALLS	51	96

### IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 500

DAN LAACK	598
DEL GROSS	585
BOB WAGNER	546
DON WIEDMANN	530
EUGENE HERRICK	506

### IND. HIGH GAME OVER 185

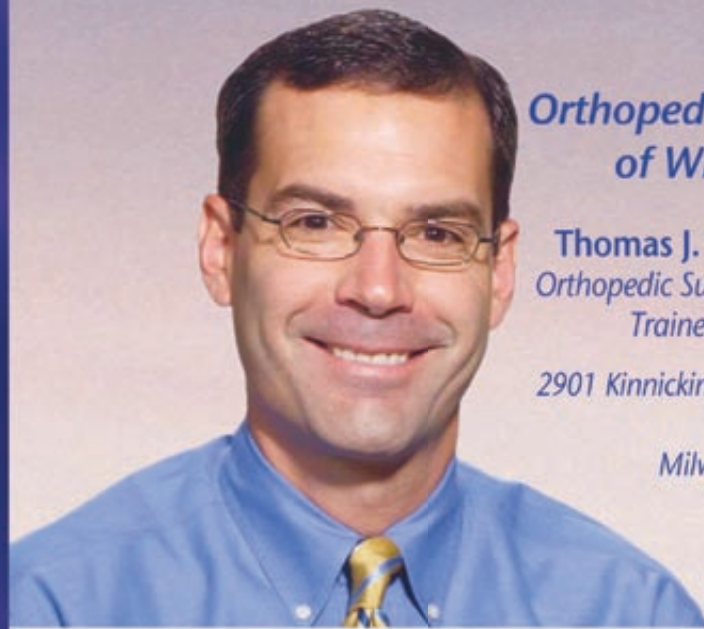
DAN LAACK	226
DON WIEDMANN	211
DEL GROSS	205
BOB WAGNER	190
RAY ZETTEL	186

### IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 400

EILEEN WESTERFIELD	556
JOYCE KNIPPEL	535
PHYLISS NAVARRETE	459
RAE MATOWSKI	418
MARLENE CORTEZ	403

### IND. HIGH GAME OVER 140

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## Delays

From Page 1

loose

Way back as 2009 started, there were reasons to believe confirmation hearings would be amiable if not a slam dunk. At least in the case of this nominee, tailor-made for her position and a respected member of Congress with a master's in public administration and a reputation for working across the aisle to benefit working families.

Since no one could question her leadership and credentials, the issue had to come down to philosophy -- or perhaps an effort to keep out of the halls of topmost power an actual inspirational story from the working class.

This nominee is the first Hispanic elected to the California senate. She beat an 18-year veteran of her own party to move to D.C. eight years ago. She is the daughter of a Mexican father (a member of the Teamsters), a Nicaraguan mother (an assembly line worker in the United Rubber Workers) -- immigrant parents who had put all their children through college.

She was a politician who converted her campaign money to help raise California's minimum wage in 1996. She was the personal choice of Caroline Kennedy in 2000 to receive a Harvard Profiles in Courage Award for pioneering environmental justice and fighting corporate dumping of pollutants into minority communities.

Because of that she was just as likely to be chosen to run the Environmental Protection Agency, but Barack Obama recognized you could not invent a better resume for Secretary of Labor.

That may have been exactly what scared the GOP into tightening those procedural handcuffs. Without per-



Rep. Solis during House hearings in 2008.

sistent media outrage, mysteriously lacking, the obstructionist spirit that has defined the Republicans in Congress landed on her with both feet.

Solis was subjected to parliamentary shelving when a Republican senator, allowed by rules to be anonymous, held up a committee vote, which would have easily passed.

That delay followed a grilling by every Republican senator on the committee along with sheaves of tactical questionnaires from them afterward. Each asked her in public and private about the Employee Free Choice Act. Many also sought to tie her down about the Right to Work laws in several states (what the unions label the Right to Work for Less States, since they sideline both organizing power and prevailing wages).

The coordinated attack clearly revealed how the GOP really hates the idea of majority choice in the workplace, even though the Free Choice bill directly relates to a federal agency Solis wouldn't control - the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

The hearings let them get away with murder on C-Span, wrapping lie upon lie into their questions -- that the act "eradicated" or "eliminated" the secret ballot (It doesn't. It just gives the choice of secret ballot back to the workforce and not a mandate for the bosses.), that it "requires" third party interference in collective bargaining (not unless a company or union refuses to negotiate).

Utah's Orrin Hatch even trotted out one of those mislead-

ing statistics - that unions win 60% of the elections that go to the NLRB, so why do they need a Free Choice Act at all, he asked. Of course, that number neglects the majority of workplace organizing efforts that never make it to an NLRB election, given corporate America's fat thumb on the scale.

The senate Republicans' attitude did remind the public that the Free Choice Act could cause layoffs in the billion dollar union animus industry run by lawyers and chamber of commerce execs. Instead of handing these folks millions to avoid unions, it might flip the money to actual pay for employees and profits for shareholders.

Play back those hearings and you'll hear Solis engaged in the standard diplomatic game with her inquisitors - polite and deferential, reminding them that the second person to call and congratulate her on the appointment was the outgoing labor secretary, Elaine Chao, who is much hated by unions but much respected by the GOP as the wife of their minority leader, Sen. Mitch McConnell (who was busy playing Lucy in promises and pull-backs with the White House).

Solis avoided openly defying the baiting senators or openly supporting Employee Free Choice in testimony, saying she and the president - it was January 9 -- had not discussed their approach. And that's what the senators were probing to learn - not where she stood but how quickly would they face Free Choice on the Senate floor and how strong would be Solis' commitment to passing it.

When she refused to play into their soundbites, they delayed her approval with some 15 sets of written questions.

Big mistake, because in those written responses, she certainly took the gloves off and erased all doubts. She assured the GOP senators that her support was unambiguous - that if she became labor secretary, she "would expect to continue to advocate for passage of the Employee Free Choice Act."

"Not all workers, of course, want or feel they need a union," she wrote in another answer. "But where a majority of the workers in a given workplace have decided that they want a union, it is a matter of basic fairness that they should be allowed to have one. That is why I support the Employee Free Choice Act."

For more on labor's push for fairer rules, see opposite page and Pages 2, 3 and 9.

The strategy of how to introduce and even amend the Act -- which faces comfortable passage in the House but needs moderate Republicans in the Senate (some of whom seem already on board) -- will be a big issue not only for the White House advisers but also for unions. It has also caused the US Chamber of Commerce to launch a non-stop bashing campaign on TV and the Internet, and it stirred businesses not even under target for union organizing to start holding closed-door sessions to berate their workers not to let any union in.

But Solis clearly intends to return the Department of Labor to its original purposes. She has actually read the original charter, which makes no mention of the "Department of Management" that Bush and Chao tried to create.

As Obama signals his desire to strengthen the income of the poor and move the middle class to healthier wages and benefits (see opposite page), the role of the Department of Labor now becomes even more imperative - and Solis may emerge as one of the economy's most powerful players.

In fact, the federal government needs a champion for workers more than at any time since FDR appointed Frances Perkins, the first woman in the cabinet and a key New Deal figure on minimum wage, Social Security and much more.

The DOL was established to foster and promote the welfare of US employees and retirees and to improve working conditions and protect worker benefits. The law says nothing about helping financiers get bonuses or stop loans for families in need.

You'll note there is nothing in the law about discredited economic theories, nothing about improving the workers' lot by speeding them to the graveyard. Nothing that supports what Obama has labeled the tired failed policies of the past -- that old trickle down, rather than trickle up, that total inability to differentiate between spending and investment, that failure to accept as economic stimulus any improvement in health care, pensions, disability and unemployment coverage.

Well, we've all seen how that turned out.

Solis will take charge of a \$52 billion plus budget (in 2008, likely to grow) and 16,000 employees. Chao left it with more workers investigating unions than investigating wage violations, with updated job classifications that actually make it more onerous to gain overtime and higher wages.

The civil servants at DOL do what they can to hold off efforts to politicize the crunching of statistics, but they've had their fingers in the dike for eight years and seen safety and financial protection for workers flooded away.

As part of this DOL Katrina, money for retraining has shrunk - in fact the entire state of Wisconsin now gets the same dollars Milwaukee alone received under the Clinton administration and even that was regarded as insufficient.

The analysis, information and one-stop services so desperately needed in our economy for the last eight years have been increasingly buried on a website almost impossible for workers to maneuver.

The GOP now has two choices - join in improvement or throw up roadblocks. It went for the barriers.

And then, worst of worst, on Feb. 5, they tried to tie Solis to the tax problems that had faced other cabinet choices, holding up her vote yet again because her husband's totally separate business had various small tax liens, some ancient, some paid in an abundance of caution before an appeal. (\$6,400 seems a small amount of liens in an auto repair business, doesn't it?)

What a turnaround since GOP senators at Solis hearings had acknowledged her husband, Sam Sayyad, joking that "we small business owners stick together."

Apparently not if guilt by association could bring another delay to an Obama choice.

This sort of corrosive treatment of qualified public servants has already backfired on the GOP. In the mental isolation booths they call TV interviews, they claim they are holding Obama's feet to the fire by waving off his olive branches and sticking with their core beliefs. Whose feet? Whose beliefs?

Haven't they noticed they are beating up on the very people who really hold the flamethrowers?

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# Despite Solis stall, Obama pushes for unions

It didn't take Barack Obama long to confirm that he stood where Hilda Solis did (*see opposite page*) on Employee Free Choice. He started acting 10 days into office when he created a taskforce to improve the middle class and signed the Lilly Ledbetter law to lengthen the time to sue companies for gender pay discrimination.

Then he went out of his way in newspaper interviews to express his support for the Employee Free Choice Act. And meanwhile he was reversing a series of Bush-era executive orders that discouraged union activities.

His new orders require federal contractors to offer jobs to current workers when contracts change, ending a game where rank-and-file workers couldn't continue working on the same federal project when the administrative contract expired.

The new rules also:

Reverse a Bush administration order requiring federal contractors to post notices about limiting financial support to unions. (Obama also eliminated a Bush decree that required unionized companies to post signs about how to decertify a union, without enforcing the reality, as Obama now will, that non-union companies should post notices of the right to organize.)

Prevent federal contractors from being reimbursed for expenses meant to influence workers on whether to form a union and engage in collective bargaining.

Require federal vendors

## How long in labor limbo?

The final decision lingered even as Labor Press published, but if she's been voted labor secretary now, Solis' life on the shelf still lasted annoying weeks before and after the Senate committee approved her (by a two-minute voice vote after all that!) -- and then there was Senate recess and further delays.

She had a longer time in limbo than the treasury secretary (Tim Geithner, who actually had some genuine tax and oversight problems). It was longer even than the attempt to solicit un-Constitutional pledges from the new attorney general, Eric Holder. (The GOP sought his promise before evidence gathering not to charge anyone in the Bush administration with torture.)

But Solis' case was like Holder's in terms of blackmail. The delay by the GOP senators came down to a cannon shot across her bow - back off from Employee Free Choice or face our wrath.

with more than \$100,000 in contracts to post workers' rights under the National Labor Relations Act.

Obama followed up by overturning yet another Bush executive order that banned project labor agreements (PLAs) on federal and federally funded construction. The ban was one of Bush's first acts after taking office in 2001, another sign of how special interest politics of the rightwing are being rejected.

Project labor agreements generally set wages and establish work rules and methods of settling grievances on large multi-contractor construction projects. For more than 70 years before the Bush order, PLAs benefited communities, employers and workers by ensuring fair wages and benefits and on-time completion of projects.

On the personal front for unions, the atmosphere has changed as this White House welcomed labor back in the front door.

For eight years no one from the AFL-CIO or other labor federations had been invited for chats at the White House. But 100 were invited to the formation of the Task Force on the Middle Class and dozens more attended or spoke at various White House ceremonies and meetings within 10 days of Obama's inauguration. That included a series of signings of bills and executive orders.

In addition, Obama named both Richard Trumka, secretary-treasurer of the national AFL-CIO, and Anna Burger of Change to Win to join his powerhouse, bipartisan 15-member Economic Recovery Advisory Board. It is headed by former Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker.

Trumka, in response to his selection February 6, said,



The digital photo that serves as President Barack Obama's first official White House portrait.

"President Obama is signaling just how seriously he takes those economic dangers and his willingness to bring together a diverse group of people to solve the problems. With massive unemployment rates, we must act now, including urgent action by Congress to pump money

back into the economy to create jobs and save people's homes."

Other appointments and actions reflect Obama's conviction that union organizing will serve as one of the major uplifting boats for our economic swamp. -- D.P.N.

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# Souvenir

From Page 1

will serve as an information package for the community as well as a powerful reminder of the range of organized labor's accomplishments.

Unions, organizations, businesses, retirees, elected officials, families and interested individuals are all invited to participate at a modest cost. May 31 is the deadline to be included.

The souvenir book will be a valuable tool with a long shelf life to tell organized labor's Milwaukee story and purposes. Copies will be given to every business and advertiser participating.

The booklet will also serve as a broadly disseminated information package for the community about the duties of the Central Labor Council that publishes this award-winning monthly newspaper.

More than a historic marker, the commemorative publication is emerging in the same year a new president and Congress are recognizing unions as a way up and out of the current doldrums.

The economic crisis in the short term hurts all American families - and every effort to balance the playing field for workers is being fought by well-heeled rightwing politicians and businesses.

But help is on the way in the majority support by the administration and Congress for the

Employee Free Choice Act and other changes in labor laws that will make it smoother for the 60 million US workers who would join a union tomorrow if they could, according to national polls.

Much of this month's Labor Press is devoted to stories about the changes in store.

Unions were a big part in raising Americans out of other economic doldrums - and you don't have to go back to the 1930s and 1940s.

Back in the 1950s unions helped a lot of workers even though they were caught up in McCarthy era attacks and even contentions of their own creation as various federations competed in philosophy and organizing methods.

But in 1955 the concept of unity was firmly established in the merger of the two largest federations -- the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

In Milwaukee that brought a reconciliation and standard of togetherness that included not just the new AFL-CIO but support for a number of independent unions and other labor organizations.

The conduit for togetherness was a unified labor council.

A charter in 1959 established what was then known as the Milwaukee County Labor Council. That is the 50 years landmark being celebrated

because it brought almost every union in the area to stand beside each other in community service, organizing drives and legislation.

(In 2008 a new name, Milwaukee Area Labor Council, reflected the additional counties involved in the council, which works with community partners and other labor federations and groups as full voting members.)

This is the outline of the story that has led to this souvenir booklet. It is where labor families and supporters can offer their congratulations and support.

A copy of the book will be distributed to every organization or business that buys a display ad. In addition to the display ads, space is being made available at a minimal cost for the names of all of our friends, family, individual union members and other supporters. The book will be available to every group that inquires about the labor council and the help it offers.

**Rate information and instructions on how to participate are included in the advertisement below.**

The deadline for submission is May 31, 2009.

You can also mail your willingness to participate to Lynnda Guyton, Milwaukee Labor Press, 633 S. Hawley Road, Suite #110, Milwaukee, WI 53214,

Or e-mail to [lynnda@milwaukeeelabor.org](mailto:lynnda@milwaukeeelabor.org),

Or call Lynnda at 414-771-7070.

# Delegates and turnover



**TOP:** Candice Owley intends to remain union active as an international officer of the American Federation of Teachers and as president of the Wisconsin Federation of Nurses & Health Professional - so busy, in fact, that she decided not to run after 27 years on the MALC executive council. The delegates thanked her in February with several rounds of applause. Above she is congratulated by President Willie D. Ellis.

**BELOW:** The hall was crowded and many new delegates were sworn in even as new board members were nominated and officers were re-elected without opposition. See story on Page 6.



## Delegate moved to help anti-war rally

On February 4, Sue Ruggles, who always updates fellow delegates on events in the peace movement, outlined the plans and the reasons for the March 21 rally at the Milwaukee Courthouse. Concern drove a fellow delegate, who asked for anonymity, to hand her \$70 on the spot to help pay for the costs of the event.

One reason? The rally marks the six anniversary of the war. Six years for a war of choice. The Milwaukee Coalition for a Just Peace is organizing the rally -- at 1 p.m. Saturday, March 21, pleading again to bring the soldiers home and drawing the connection between military spending and the economic crisis at home.

Major guest speakers are being arranged for the rally at the Milwaukee County Courthouse (Clas Park, 10th and Wells Sts.).

## Zeidler lecture sets details

A notable lecturer, a provocative topic and a date have all been reached by the organizers of the second annual Frank P. Zeidler Memorial Lecture, and plans are also in the works for public telecast.

The free lecture will be held at 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 24, at historic Centennial Hall at the Downtown Milwaukee Public Library.

The speaker is Milwaukee's notable local historian, John Gurda, who was a friend of the late Zeidler and a student of his tenure as mayor. The topic, which Gurda himself selected, is "Public Enterprise: How the Socialists Saved Milwaukee."



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