



WALKER'S NEW DARLING

She veers so far from base that past voters turn toward Pasch

By Dominique Paul Noth

Editor, Labor Press

Before being elected to the US House in 2004, Gwen Moore served a decade and a half across the aisle from the GOP's Alberta Darling in the state legislature - and the memories of this outspokenly progressive Democrat might surprise some of her constituents.

Darling was always a "supporter of school choice, but I recall her behavior well," said Moore -- quite aware that "recall" is a loaded word these days. But sometimes when issues of working people, the poor, children, teachers and similar concerns were under discussion, Moore remembers, "I could cross the aisle and at least talk to her."

This was back in the 1990s. Voters in Senate District 8 actually elected Darling time and again based on that reputation of being approachable on the issues of everyday people. She first won attention and then election as a centrist -- what talk radio's Charlie Sykes would label a RINO (Republicans In Name Only, a pejorative that relegates any thinking moderate to the sidelines in the modern Tea Party dominated GOP).

Today, Darling is welcome on talk radio as a ferocious right-winger and water carrier for Gov. Walker's budget, the defender of stubborn negativity as co-chair of the joint finance committee. From that seat she actually engineered many of Walker's crushing blows to education, municipalities and the middle class. All of which led to widespread anger among voters and a more than even chance that she will be recalled Aug. 9 as part of a Democrat effort to take back the senate.

It is quite a fall from the Darling image that helped her maintain her senate seat for two decades -- and it explains why for 2012 the GOP intends to redraw her district to eliminate the more liberal sections.

Despite her denials today, Darling sure worked the center in her road to Madison, impress-



THEIR MANY PERSONAL REASONS for disliking the much changed Alberta Darling, and admiring the Democrat opposing her, Rep. Sandy Pasch, were shared by Assembly minority leader Peter Barca (above left) and by US Rep. Gwen Moore, who once worked across the aisle from Darling.

AT RIGHT Moore shared a laugh and hug with candidate Pasch. This was one of many large and small fund raisers and rallies for Pasch throughout District 8 this summer, here crowding the backyard of UAW leader and UW regent John Drew and MATC leader Lauren Baker. Among the listeners (center in photo) were MALC executive council members Patrick Weyer and Anthony Rainey.

ing with her River Hills life-style and income, yet -- even as president of the Junior League -- giving lip service to more openness.

This in a suburb where space and high income are hallmarks -- and two and a half acre lots tend to insulate residents from kitchen-table concerns. Still, it would be foolish to judge ideological leanings just from that, and Darling would be amazed how even many River Hills residents no longer back her, but she did understand that a country club image did not play well with the voters in a district stretching from Shorewood to Germantown and reflecting diverse levels of income and ideology.

Darling in those early days played the isolation conflict well politically, cultivating an image as caring conservative, one of those Bushie "thousand points of

light" emphasizing her social outreach, belief in public health care and education and image as a working mother of two.

The concerned mother thing worked well then and today her status as senior citizen leaves retirees disbelieving that she prefers protecting the richest 1% to defending fixed-incomes.

Trained as a teacher, in the 1980s she did PR work for the art museum and an architect firm and became a spokesman for Milwaukee Mayor John Norquist's first efforts at a Winterfest (known as Icebreaker). She called it a success. It was clearly important to be tied to successes.

Even in 1992, endorsees in the old Milwaukee Sentinel, whose conservative editorialists backed her, emphasized her concern for "affordable and accessible health care," "social concerns" and "championing legislation that is good for all workers." In 1996 she introduced efforts -- amazing considering today's Darling -- to protect seniority in hiring public workers.

Some of that may have been political catering, but it reflected a sense of where her voters were

shifted from a sensible middle to the radical right on such issues -- all that two-step has left her vulnerable to charges that she has now abandoned the core principles of family values that first got her elected.

Slashing \$1 million last May from family planning offices to Planned Parenthood -- none of it involving abortion -- clearly became an "enough is enough" factor in the decision of Rep. Sandy Pasch -- a wife, mother, nurse and teacher of nurses -- to run against her, pointing out that Darling "puts ideological purity above women's health care just to cater to the extreme political bosses in Madison, and that's never been what the people of the 8th senate district look for in their representative."

But this is not the only area of change from the legacy Darling established in her early public life. She went through the same leadership training and steering committee "Goals" advocacy as such notables as Pedro Colon, Lee Holloway, Dennis McBride and Donald Sykes. She was more recognized for social involvement than the fiscal conservatism she touts today, and the legislative record indicates that in the 1990s she did indeed work the aisle, though that largely ended in 2000.

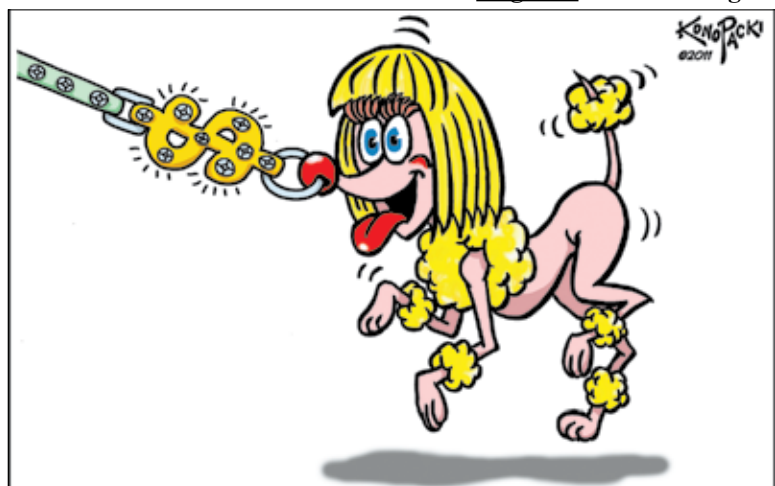
That reputation she clings to is actually long gone, though even in interviews this year she insisted she had not changed "I remain the same person who the voters elected," she told Whitefish Bay Patch reporter Marie Rohde, a former colleague at Milwaukee Journal, and then added an astoundingly misleading comment on why she had to bull through budget changes in 2011 without discussion or debate.

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and raises the troubling question of where they are today.

She was also a noted activist for Planned Parenthood, though that high office -- president of the advisory board of Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin -- has now disappeared from her resumes, since it would sting her conservative center. Her attempts to deny her past enthusiasm for women's reproductive rights, to avoid her early campaign statements that actually echo the likes of Hillary Clinton ("abortion should be legal but rare"), and given how much the Republican party has



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seat next year (and is actually leading in polls and money raised); California's Barbara Lee (bottom left), famous for standing alone for years against America's Iraq war (and also honored on this rare visit by a plaque from the Wisconsin Peace Coalition) and Illinois' Jan Schakowsky (bottom right), long a prominent voice for progressive causes in Washington legislation.



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Thursday, August 4-14

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Exposition Center, Wisconsin State Fair

Tuesday, August 9

Take Back the Senate! 6 Elections!!

Senate District 8

Democrat Rep. Sandy Pasch (D-Whitefish Bay) our choice to replace incumbent Alberta Darling (R-River Hills)

Polls open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Wednesday, August 31

Executive Council Meeting

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

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August 9

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"This is simply not a good environment to try to do consensus building," she said. "There is not another side willing to work across the aisle."

"How sad," said Moore. "She's unreachable today, terribly changed."

Even Pasch recalls with some amusement how in the early 1990s she allowed one of her children to carry a sign for Darling based - "on all things," Pasch laughed - on her reputation of supporting public education.

The change in Darling is irreversible. Not just memories but the facts pinpoint not only that it happened but even suggest why and when she took the hard shift to the right, the willingness to play party stooge, foil to budget attacks on workers and doormat for ideas added to the budget through her novice co-chair from the Assembly, Robin Voss.

Back in 1998, in fact, when she was flirting with running against Mark Neumann to take on Russ Feingold for the US senate, the Washington Post described her as the "pro-choice moderate" in Wisconsin out to enliven the reputation of the staid state Republican Party to successfully combat Feingold's reputation of working with both sides. That was clearly an exaggeration of her politics, but she formed an exploratory committee, leading commentators to worry she could split the Republican vote in a primary - and the coffers.

Many Republicans thought she was a better opponent to face Feingold; but conservatives and Neumann's money people feared out loud that her reputation as being somewhat more moderate, combined with her River Hills connections, would hit the party in the pocketbook. They leaned hard on her to withdraw - as did many of her previous funders.

And soon she did. To many observers that moment ensured her harsher turn right.

"It was about money," said one former insider. "She saw that Neumann's credentials, more conservative, were pulling in the donors and that she would be regarded as their enemy if she persisted. But she got the clear message -- that super conservative was where she needed to go to keep them in her camp."



TV cameras crowded in July 12 when Pasch handily beat the fake Dem concocted by the GOP.



Sandy Pasch's persuasive style is drawing many voters who previously supported Alberta Darling.

The push for corporate financing and away from a conciliatory collegial stance has paid off-- in dollars at least. Money has been flowing to Darling since - before she was actively threatened with a recall.

On plane flights last February, when recall talk had barely begun, her country club supporters -- self-identified -- were overheard heatedly pressing energy executives and other bigwigs to "save Alberta" by sending money.

A loophole in the campaign finance laws allows any recall-threatened legislator to suspend normal rules before an election date is actually called, and during that time frame Darling was not limited to \$1,000 per contributor. She racked it up, surpassing every other threatened candidate. She collected 10 and 20 times that amount from oil and energy executives and spent more than \$400,000 before the election date was called and Pasch announced her intentions to run.

Darling has a lot of contributions left, since sources confirmed she has gathered a million dollars - astounding for a state senate face. Third party corporate conduits, taking advantage of rules that allow contributors anonymity, will pound in during the last few weeks before Aug. 9. And while Pasch doesn't have that level of money, there is more than enough to compete, with outside groups eager to counter-attack the GOP's better funded outside groups..

Enthusiasm and public anger are clearly behind Pasch so it will take every bit of corporate money to prop up the fading Darling reputation. They have to sell the former Darling to keep the current one in office.

The fade is proving crucial when you consider how narrowly she escaped defeat in 2008, admittedly a Democratic year with unusually high turnout because of enthusiasm for Obama. Nearly 100,000 voters turned out in District 8, split closely, with 50,000 for Darling

and 49,000 for her opponent.

So it's a compliment that Darling survived, leading many pundits to proclaim the district more Republican than Democrat. But one resident who used to work on her campaigns sees it differently.

"In 2008 they still believed in the old Darling, working for her people regardless of who was in power," she told me. "Today, when I listen to the talk, that belief is long gone. I think there are now 30,000 who will just stay away or can't bring themselves to support her."

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Conflicted voices on District 8 streets

The problem is going to be the retirees. Their kids are grown so they really don't care about the education issue. When you hear them moan about how the corporations screwed them, you understand why they can't wait to stick it to the public workers.

- We Are Wisconsin canvasser in Germantown

Our problem is the soc-

cer moms - they're angry that Alberta has crippled their teachers AND their kids.

- Young Republican volunteer in Mequon

It's the money thing - they don't trust what the Republicans are saying but they've been taught to trust the Democrats less.

- Treasurer for nonprofit

"It's not about money. It's about being Christian.

Walker and Darling have lost their way.

- Churchgoer who volunteered for Pasch

Walking the streets and working the phones in Senate District 8 provide interesting perspectives on what will happen Aug. 9 even in neighborhoods long regarded as surefire Republican.

There is disappointment, even unbelieving disappointment, in the changes in incumbent

Alberta Darling. In the age of the Internet there's hot discussions on both sides -- ignorance on some crucial issues, combined with surprising sophistication in understanding the details of Walker's budget, which is almost universally detested.

It is not just diehard supporters of unions who are upset. It is small business owners, traditional Republican voters, parents, bartenders, storekeepers, many looking at their personal income and not seeing any help - in fact, more injury - in the Walker budget that Darling shepherded.

Democrats have long argued that the economic philosophy reflected by Darling and her peers - cut spending, don't increase revenues, attack benefits, don't create jobs - is horribly wrong minded.

But that's not the central issue for many voters, who are obviously conflicted. Some don't want to abandon their Republican roots while they are disappointed in Darling's performance and what they call Walker's over-reach. They are not ready to change party stripes for the future. Their question is: What do they do about Darling this summer? Stay home August 9? Vote for Pasch? Hold their nose and vote as before?

Even Republicans who serve local school boards and municipalities reflect that unhappiness and so do many parents who depend on the public schools to educate their children and admit they seldom voted Democrat before.

These people know enough neighboring families in public service to dislike how teachers and other public workers are being portrayed and blamed. "I'm a parent," one told me, "but I rely on teachers because they know more about how to educate my children -- so why should I support politicians who treat them as second class?"

These voters know enough math, even old math, to realize how little curbing unions had to do with the extent of the cuts of \$1.6 billion in two years from public education. They don't want it to be their children who settle for flipping hamburgers, which one Republican called a good job. And these voters also told me they remember "there were much bigger deficits under Republican governors that Darling voted for, right?" That is right, so they can't buy into that particular advertising blitz.

Many now are realizing, thanks to all the publicity the race has engendered, how Darling exposed her penchant for privatization whatever the costs. While voting to cut public education, then municipal budgets -- and forcing conniptions by any community that wants to continue basic services -- Darling sped more taxpayer money to private school tuition, an expansion of



Pasch has been punching home the differences -- and voters seem to be responding.

the voucher program that few in her district support and most can't even be part of.

These voters also no longer regard as elected official neutrality those home mailings paid by taxpayer money Darling sends out as "information." In one letter she boasted to constituents how she "rescued" SeniorCare and FamilyCare. The facts tell a different story and are readily researched in this electronic age. In the first case, she supported in the budget near elimination of SeniorCare before reversing course because of citizen petitions. In the second, she still supports a cap on the waiting list for FamilyCare, a program that saves money. By now requiring someone to die before others can get on the list, her budget decision is both callous and costly to taxpayers.

"Anyone can balance a budget if they don't care who is hurt," says opponent Pasch, a view of Darling's ideological excess that seems to be resonating.

The truth, local Republican officials told reporters, is that Darling had the power to stop or modify all this given her position -- and refused. One suburban school board member who has fought with unions told me, "I'm Republican, but I cannot forgive her for this and I sure can't vote for her ever again."

In contrast, some business executives say she supported tax credits and policy changes that they believe will raise their profit margins and that approach is worth keeping family incomes stagnant - "at least for a while," one hastened to amend. So they assured me they will drown her campaign with money.

It does sound like snake-oil thinking - Darling can still sell herself as the little people's champion while larding the profits of the very rich. But in what the GOP hopes is a lazy summer where voters are hard to corral and tend to vote tradition, that's the key to her survival. Crassly, they have the money to keep the most alarmed citizens from voting.

-- Dominique Paul Noth



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All 6 Aug. 9 races boast strong Democrats

After sweeping away the Republican effort that ran fake Dems against them July 12, all six of the genuine Democrat challengers take on Republican incumbents August 9.

The GOP counter-ad strategy is much the same in all the elections. One prong is to debunk the very idea of recalls and to make it sound like Republicans shouldn't be ousted for simply voting for Walker's budget even if it decimates local communities and public worker rights. But many of these incumbents did more than vote. They introduced or shepherded pieces of the legislation. They refused to heed even the complaints of their own constituents.

These were all Republicans elected in 2008, so none were newbies. All could have voted more intelligently. Only now are a few out in the center and west of the state bleating about how they didn't know what they were doing.

As to that claim, retired US Rep. Dave Obey was blunt in how to answer. "If they voted with Walker, they are no moderates - no matter how they pretend. They're cowards. And for that alone they should be bounced."

It will take only three Democrat wins to change the majority in the Senate, but organizers are aiming to advance all six Democrats. One way is through "relational campaigning."

That means asking supporters of the recalls who may not live in these districts to reach out to those who do - friends, colleagues, family members and retirees, a potent source of votes given Wisconsin's affinity for enjoying the home state for vacations and family gatherings.

For the Milwaukee area, Senate District 8, the Democrats have reasons to expect victory for Rep. Sandy Pasch, whose credentials fit the district like a much healthier and more energetic mirror of the now fuzzy Alberta Darling: A Whitefish Bay mother, nurse, teacher and expert on health and education issues who turned to political office only after raising a family.

That resume defeats another prong in the GOP fork, as I indicated in online columns - the vain attempt to paint all the Democrats as somewhere to the left of Sacco and Vanzetti. It is particularly ineffective this election. Pasch is



From left: Democrat candidates for state senate Clark, King, Moore, Nusbaum and Shilling

clearly a progressive liberal but Alberta Darling has been ducking the debates that would reveal the opponent as pragmatic and sensible, not extreme. Pasch has worked as a conciliator, introducing bills in such areas as mental health that both sides have honored. The power of her ideas comes as from the civil maner, the deceptively light needle and the toughness under a diminutive presence, recalling she first campaigned from a wheelchair and on crutches when she slipped on the ice in 2008. The less Darling has to face her, the more the ads can continue the exaggeration.

Senate District 8 includes Assembly Districts 22, 23 and 24, (a few wards of) the city of Milwaukee, then Shorewood, Whitefish Bay, Fox Point, River Hills, Bayside, Mequon, Brown Deer, Menomonee Falls, Thiensville, Germantown, Butler and portions of Richfield.

Senate District 2 Incumbent Rob Cowles (R-Allouez) faces a veteran name who actually first ran as a Republican and then served the nonpartisan role of Brown County executive. She is the highly regarded Democrat Nancy Nusbaum, who soundly whipped a fake Democrat July 12. The district includes Assembly Districts 4, 5, 6, Oconto, Shawano, Brown and Outagamie counties.

Senate District 10 Incumbent Sheila Harsdorf (R-River Falls) first expected to blow away a political newcomer, but teacher Shelly Moore is actually given the edge in polls, has a professional campaign team and a message of honesty and integrity while now Harsdorf keeps changing stripes to avoid defeat. District includes

Assembly Districts 28, 29, 30, Pierce, St. Croix, Polk and Burnett counties.

Senate District 14 Incumbent Luther Olsen (R-Ripon) also can't demean his opponent, because the community knows Rep. Fred Clark is in nobody's pocket. He ran a business, is a noted outdoorsman and is famous for speaking his mind and sticking to his guns. District includes Assembly Districts 40 41, 42, Waupaca, Waushara, Marquette and Green Lake counties.

Senate District 18 Talk about shooting yourself in the foot! Incumbent Randy Hopper (R-Fond du Lac) has done just that with his tax record, favoritism to rich friends and curious domestic situation, when his wife revealed during the recall petitioning that he was living in Madison with his young girl friend.

Worse for Randy, his opponent almost took him out in 2008, losing by only a few votes, and she is the highly regarded, knowledgeable deputy mayor of Oshkosh, Jessica King. The region includes Assembly Districts 52, 53, 54, Fond du Lac County and such cities as Oshkosh, Algoma, Friendship, Taycheedah and Fond du Lac.

Senate District 32 Well behind in the polls, incumbent Dan Kapanke (R-La Crosse) said aloud that he hoped all the public workers in his district would go to sleep Aug. 9. It's his voting record that keeps them awake plus the contrasting strong reputation for public service and open debate of his experienced opponent, Rep. Jennifer Shilling. Region includes Assembly Districts 94, 95, 96 counties Trempealeau, La Crosse, Vernon and Crawford.



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It's reality that ruins Darling's jaded rhetoric

Darling's rhetoric has not much changed over two decades though her ideology has. I attended policy debates several years ago when she used the same talking points

and facial expressions about "I'm always thinking of what's good for teachers and children" and "watching out for your hard-earned dollars." Who could challenge such platitudes --

would a pleasant politician lie to your face?

The difference this time is actions speak louder than words.

Darling can no longer pretend to be the veteran who knows the legislative ropes. Circumstances have put her on the defensive again and again. She's either inept or willingly blind since she helped shape and pass the budget amendments - and then was forced to backtrack or refute many items she rubber-stamped or even helped put in -shrinking Senior Care, ending recycling, turning down federal stimulus money, attitudes she reversed due to public outrage.

Even more amusing to old-time legislators - who remember with snickers when she wouldn't be caught dead stuck on an elevator with an opinionated relentless young right-winger named Scott Walker -- she has had to be pulled back in recent days from too obviously exposing him to political harm.

She supported and then retreated on rewarding Milwaukee police facing criminal charges, on bills supporting the bail and snuff tobacco industries that were too obviously linked to Koch-funded lobbyists.. She was forced to tell the press

she "had not appreciated the actual contents" (or rather, how damaging they would seem politically). Increasingly she seems isolated from common sense.

She also hasn't caught up to an Internet age that negates a lot of the incumbency tools that once protected her. A number of former Darling supporters openly scoffed to this reporter at her budget defense in Madison - recorded for all to hear on YouTube - when she strangely said ordinary families "don't live on their credit cards" while the government does. The simpler truth - too many families do live on their credit cards. The credit card analogy for government overlooks income surges most households don't enjoy.

Living on fixed income is quite different than a projected \$3.6 billion deficit that can and did shrink by \$500,000 when more revenue came in.

Darling doesn't discuss in

that video how her "balanced budget" mainly comes from a 5.5% hike in UW system tuition. Her summary neglected how corporations were given even more breaks to escape income tax.

The budget avoids the obvious direct methods less painful to working families, such as shared sacrifice and shutting loopholes.

But it is the education cuts primarily turning voters away from Darling. The loss of hundreds of dollars per pupil stirred incredulity from Menomonee Falls to Thiensville because there are no true-fix tools in the budget, despite GOP rhetoric. And there is the growing belief that Darling could have and should have stopped this.

"What planet is she living on?" whispered one District 8 resident in the hallway of a recent forum defending Darling. "The better question," her companion whispered back, "is what planet has she moved to?"

-- D.P.N.

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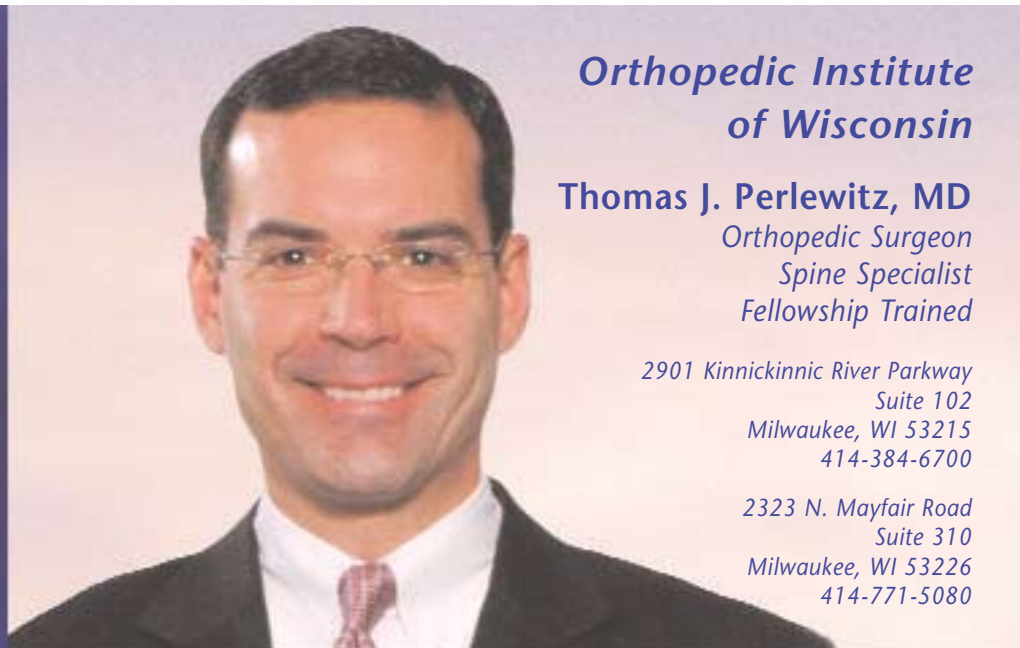
Catch us and the Harley bike at State Fair

The State Fair is where unions are showing politeness and the power of their products and services Aug. 4-14 with the theme: BUY AMERICAN BUY UNION.

The Milwaukee Area Labor Council sponsors, organizes and operates this Union Label Booth and its free giveaways in the enormous Wisconsin Exposition Center in West Allis. Members and retirees staff the booth in exchange for admission tickets to the fair.

It costs the labor council to put on the Union Label Booth, about \$5,500, noted Willie D. Ellis, Operating Engineers Local 139 and also president of the MALC. Contributions in support of the booth are tax deductible through the 501(c)3 Labor Community @ Work, operated through the MALC office at 633 S. Hawley Rd. Milwaukee, WI 53214, where volunteers also sign up and pick up their materials during the fair.

The fair is also the first opportunity to see and buy tickets for the new advanced model Harley Davidson motorcycle that will be raffled off on Labor Day at Laborfest.



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IWF uncovers state's corporate tax avoiders

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

There is a tendency, stemming from his limited skills as Milwaukee County executive, to think of Scott Walker as a one-trick pony willing to destroy safety nets as long as he didn't raise property taxes (his rather misguided approach to economic health). But as governor he's ponied up in misguidedness, so to speak, by learning how to reward corporate backers with tax breaks in exchange for sophisticated help in disguising his transgressions. He now has a legion of tricksters to help him -- right-wing foundations and lobbyist conduits that spent decades concocting legislative agendas; obedient operatives to stack the state deck; minions to coerce traditional Republicans into going along with excess if they want to maintain power. See Page 8. This slicker mechanical bull has the forces to stampede his party, the media and the public on several fronts.

It may - wishful thinking - be only temporary political tyranny, but it does force opponents to act more nimbly and think more creatively than ever before. Unions, for instance, were first focused on the long-term damage to members' rights, as well as to their political clout, by his attack on public worker, so nimbleness took time to develop. The biggest slowness lingers, and it is the media's - normally the people's balancing wheel in exposing political games.

But in large part media, electronic and otherwise, has not

yet caught on because of the smorgasbord of approaches within the budget. Even today, they're misled by GOP semantic games. Much of the media failed to see the sweep and calculation of Walker's attacks and how public reaction transcended union issues.

So where does the public turn for answers when the mass media fails?

A few forceful and probing analysts do remain to look at the real consequences of Walker's methods, in which shared sacrifice is eliminated in the haste to protect his well-heeled corporate backers. When you start looking at who is getting away with murder - that is, not paying a whit in our supposed economic crisis - when you look at the dead-of-night rewards inserted into the budget to lower the revenue the state gets from corporations, a different picture of Walker's policy emerges than the one conveniently portrayed in his press releases and in too much of the media coverage.

Which brings us to IWF, the Institute for Wisconsin's Future, which just created a new research based newsletter that reveals who is not paying any fair share. But the newsletter does more without flourishes - it exposes as IWF often does the revenue opportunities that Walker's packaged think machines have overlooked and are at least worth debating. (It will take an evaporation of the GOP control of the senate to bring such detailed discussion, but that is around the corner.)

The research director for the



Jack Norman took questions on the state economy during a recent panel appearance.

IWF is Jack Norman, who for decades was the lead business reporter for The Milwaukee Journal and whose ability to read corporate financial data and legislative trickery, and explain it all in English, is unsurpassed. The newsletter, whose first edition can now be found in the Take Action section of milwaukeekeelabor.org, is bluntly named: Who Does Not Pay Taxes?

In lucid English and simple charts, it tells you the facts - and quite fairly. For instance, Norman points out that when the market collapsed in 2009 it was fair that Associated Bank paid nothing in state taxes that year. But from 2001 to 2008, when the Green Bay bank, the state's largest, made \$2.6 billion in pre-

tax profits, it also paid zero in state income taxes. How can that be? And what will it escape with now that Walker's budget adds even more loopholes that the bank - which last year held deposits of \$17 billion, 71% from state residents - can drive bigger trucks through?

Among the loopholes are devices of counting the losses in one bad recessionary year to wipe out taxes on obscene gains in profitable years. Another prevents the Department of Revenue from challenging tax-avoidance strategies attacked before Walker took over.

More profits for corporations would probably not bother many voters if that translated into more employment, more jobs and more money for consumers to spend. Any promises in that vein are pie in the sky, as Norman's research reveals - no mechanisms to create more jobs, just laws and government money to reward those who gave money to Walker and apparently suggested many of the loopholes.

Norman's research reveals a little-known budget maneuver inserted by GOP Sen. Glenn Grothman that by 2017 will virtually eliminate corporate income tax on manufacturers and agricultural businesses. The step

by step change will cost the state \$129 million in revenue and has no teeth to make companies create jobs - yet even in the days before Walker, Wisconsin has the fourth lowest taxes in the US for new business investments.

And we all know from current news stories even in conservative publications like the Wall Street Journal how businesses have found ways to increase profits without increasing jobs or wages, which goes a long way to explaining our unemployment levels.

The lack of effort by Walker to make businesses reward communities -- while they are lining their own pockets -- is one of the most troublesome aspects of his approach to Wisconsin's future. You would think that most newspapers would be all over these schemes.

Until they wake up, we've got Norman, who may have the experience to take the rest of the media to the woodshed and teach them the basic principles of Journalism 101.

But that's not his mission. It is, he says, to advance ways of improving the state's economy and revenue picture - and those are reports the Labor Press is committed to publicizing.

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WisconsinVision

Did UW prof inspire media interest in ALEC?

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

From the Nation magazine to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, from In These Times on the Internet to MSNBC on cable, there are suddenly reporting teams doing thorough investigations of how the Koch funded and corporate backed right-wing American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) has more than influenced - it has flat-out funded and motivated elected officials to introduce and pass state legislation long

sought-for by rabid conservatives, legislation that if voters of all stripes had known about in advance would have been violently rejected as vulgar rewards to the very rich.

It's all fascinating to many of us who wrote about ALEC before this new wave of investigative reporting. But we would all be remiss to not remember the nonpartisan warning shot that started it all.

It came from a pointed but mildly inquisitive blog by noted University of Wisconsin histori-

an William Cronan last winter, who simply suggested in a scholarly way that the public should know more about ALEC and its role in Scott Walker's suddenly sophisticated legislative blitz.

It has long been obvious to some Wisconsin reporters that all this detailed, anticipatory and vetted legislation was pouring out of a governor hardly known previously for any ability to multi-task. But that was suspicion without tools and legal recourse to probe the protective depths around ALEC.

It was the excessive right-wing reaction to Cronan that made all the difference. His simple inquiry produced an alarmingly passionate partisan over-response - a demand from a high-placed GOP operative for his academic emails. It shocked anyone who understands academic research and doubly shocked those who know Cronan's unassailable credentials for balanced curiosity.

Looking back, it was all this that woke up the media. The Center for Media and Democracy created an ALEC Exposed website -- alecexposed.org/wiki/ALEC_Exposed -- doing something close to what Cronan gently suggested for scholarship. It found a whistleblower to release more than 800 bills in the hidden ALEC database and started ana-

lyzing them and comparing them to what happened when Republicans took control of so many state legislatures.

The leaked bills reflect concepts the lobbyists and foundation mavens of ALEC had been researching, checking with conservative lawyers and readying for the last decade of the organization's forty years. The website and now the media took notice of a funding mechanism that has allowed ALEC to get so many bills through. It charges \$50 for legislators of the right ilk to join, and they often pay that entry fee with taxpayer money.

Corporations -- the main beneficiaries - pay many thousands of dollars in contrast, thus providing ALEC with both the money to operate and the influence in state houses.

The lavish ALEC gatherings further offer an eager politician ways to connect with sources of corporate donors outside his own state and with lobbyists from the bail, oil, tobacco, pharma and other corporate industries.

The Journal Sentinel, a newspaper that actually supported Walker for governor and now must be rethinking that lapse in judgment, just this month examined new information and reported that even though Walker and Republican lawmakers (such as joint finance co-chair Robin

Voss, who is the ALEC whip in Wisconsin and even introduced several ALEC concepts), downplayed connections between ALEC's agenda and their legislative efforts, but the connections were there. Said the newspaper with understatement, "The similarities between some Wisconsin legislation and ALEC draft bills are striking."

The Nation published a trio of articles outlining ALEC's ties to the Koch Brothers, the drive to block and then repeal health care reform and its efforts to turn over state services to its private corporate membership.

This newest downloadable information on ALEC should spur all levels of citizens and justice departments to take a closer look at what's happening in state legislatures.

This very radical agenda led the AFL-CIO blog to ask: Why is Wal-Mart involved with an organization that wants to turn Medicare and Medicaid into voucher plans? Why is Kraft working with a group that wants to privatize the public school system? Why is Coca-Cola going along with efforts to take away voting rights from college students? Why are Bayer and Pfizer in bed with big tobacco?

Then again, all these firms are on ALEC's corporate board.



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