



Sen. Russ Feingold devoted much of his mingling and comments to urging support for Lena Taylor at his birthday party in the Third Ward Riverfront Pizzeria.



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Lt. Gov. Barbara Lawton (left) enlivened the March delegate party with a rousing pitch for Taylor and pointed distaste for the incumbent county executive. Among the political leaders joining her at the open house were legendary civil rights, aldermanic and judiciary leader Vel Phillips and Milwaukee School Board President Peter Blewett.

Big names signal urgent need to elect Lena

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

One of the best extemporaneous speakers in Wisconsin politics, Lt. Gov. Barbara Lawton, motivated the March 5 delegate meeting with a call to action and a plea for common sense - elect a new Milwaukee County Executive.

"It's essential not just for Milwaukee but for the entire state of Wisconsin," she said. "We must get rid of Scott Walker who holds government in contempt" a man "who will never understand how government works and doesn't believe in it anyway" and "will auction off our beloved county in pieces."

"I'll be damned - excuse me - if we'll let that happen."

Lawton had just anchored a Downtown fund-raiser for state Sen. Lena Taylor. She then scooted to the Serb Hall meeting and open house to swear in a new executive council member, Anthony Rainey. But she confessed "I'm still pumped up" at the financial smarts and solutions being offered by Taylor, who is running hard and well against Scott Walker.

"She has the vision but she also has the respect of the officials the county must work with," noted Lawton.

Lined up behind Taylor' bid with formal endorsements are both US senators, Herb Kohl and Russ Feingold, all the Democratic House members, Gov. Doyle, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett and the vast majority of Milwaukee's elected officials.

Lawton, who also comforted listeners by debunking a Feb. 23 rumor in the Journal Sentinel that she was quitting politics ("Where did they get that?"), noted that time was running short before the April 1 election and that "I will be back to fight with you."

But right now, she said, "Hit the doors, spread the message, tell your friends - this is do-able!"

The only thing keeping Taylor the underdog has been the power of Walker's purse - a four to one money advantage gathered for months - the bully pulpit of his office and the higher name recognition.

The solution? "GET HER IN FULL VIEW!" said Lawton. "And we win."

Taylor, no slouch herself in speaking on the stump, has been hitting communities north and south and scoring points by explaining her drive, embracing expertise from all communities and saying the county needs her deep optimistic faith and her proven ability.

It's time, she says, to restore both the beauty and efficiency that once set the county apart for families.

"Nobody wants outrageous taxes," she says, "but somebody has to protect our assets - really get rid of inefficiencies and be accountable for where the dollars go."

In one forum, she dismissed
Lena continued Page 8



Members of many unions set up phones and crowded into four offices to create active phone banks through Election Day at the Milwaukee labor council's headquarters.

Butler wants campaign honest, direct

When incumbent Justice Louis Butler and Burnett County Circuit Judge Mike Gableman met in Madison for a debate, the



Justice Louis Butler

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel misled the casual reader.

It was correct that third party ads for both sides are engaged in a "noisy campaign," but then the reporter said in the lead paragraph that both candidates insisted they would "rather focus on their own arguments" than the charges of outside advertising groups.

Yet only Butler was insisting. He had urged all third par-

ties to "stand down." He decried the extreme advertising money that had entered the Supreme Court races and muffled the basics of character, experience and philosophies.

His own campaign ads, few and selective, drove home that point, with Butler simply talking quietly to viewers on broad philosophical themes and judicial balance, the sort of political dis-

Butler continued Page 9

2 paths seek annual renewal of Zeidler legacy

Jeremy Scahill, the applauded author of the best-selling "Blackwater," will present the first of what is expected to be annual major lectures in honor of the late Frank Zeidler. It is actually the opening salvo of new events in honor of Milwaukee's last Socialist mayor.

The lecture is free. It will be held in Centennial Hall, a famous meeting place attached to Milwaukee's downtown Public Library, at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 25.

Friends and fans of Zeidler, Milwaukee's last Socialist mayor (1948-1960) and today the city's most respected public official for his tenure, progressive ideals and commitment to the community, have created this "Annual Frank P. Zeidler Memorial Lecture" to honor him.

Also created in a separate action is the Zeidler Public Service Award, which each year will seek out the city of Milwaukee resident who best exemplifies the devotion and vision of Zeidler.

The nomination form for the Zeidler Public Service Award is available online under the Take Action menu of milwaukeeelabor.org, the news and information website of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council.

Those who download the



In his final months back in 2006, only labor history events drew Frank Zeidler to public appearances, such as the annual Bay View tragedy memorial shown in the photo.

form will be given the rules of submission - a supporting letter, resume and any other helpful materials. These must be turned in by June 30, 2008, and the recipient will be chosen by the end of the year

The selection committee includes historian John Gurda, Atty. Art Heitzer, Ald. Robert Baumann and former Mayor

Marvin Pratt. City leaders have helped to create the award. As to the lecture series, the International Institute is helping promote the first on March 25.

The choice of author Scahill to launch the series would please Zeidler, these friends say, because of his commitment to peace, strong opposition to priva-

tizing public services and personal ethics. He constantly read American history to help frame his actions and views.

In this case, Zeidler told Labor Press before his death in 2006, the United States has shopped out its war responsibilities and ethics to secretive organizations. He may have meant the current group in the White House, but Scahill's book certainly seems like a natural extension.

"Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army" has won awards for its impressive depth in exploring how privatization, militarism and global dominance worked together to siphon off much of America's wealth, increase the distrust of the US in Iraq and lead to some of the



Author Jeremy Scahill

most brutal moments in the occupation.

Scahill will talk about privatization and there will be both an open reception and book signing at the end of the event.

Tax deductible donations to support the Zeidler lectures can be made to the International Institute of Wisconsin (use the memo field on your check to write "Zeidler lecture"). For more information contact Phil Blank, cell 414-828-7723.

Zeidler is best known as one of Milwaukee's most effective mayors who steered the community from 1948 to 1960, a period of incredible growth and demographic transition.

Before and long afterward, he was revered as a school board member, a civic activist, the civic conscience, a local historian, an admired lecturer, a Socialist Party leader, United Nations advocate, churchman and proponent of social justice.

Quite a resume for any to live up to, but each year the committee will search for the Milwaukee resident who best reflects those values and commitments.

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

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

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ILCA International Labor Communications Association
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MLPA Midwest Labor Press Association

THE MILWAUKEE LABOR PRESS (USPS 350-360) is published once a month by the Milwaukee Area Labor Council AFL-CIO, 633 S. Hawley Rd., Milwaukee, WI 53214, and is also available by subscription for \$12 a year. Periodical postage paid at Milwaukee, WI.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the AFL-CIO MILWAUKEE LABOR PRESS, 633 S. Hawley Rd., Suite 110, Milwaukee, WI 53214.
The Publisher reserves the right to refuse or discontinue any advertisement which is deemed objectionable. Publication of advertisements is not to be construed as a personal endorsement nor are all ads necessarily from unionized companies or services of the Milwaukee County Labor Council or any of its affiliates.
COPY DEADLINE: Usually by noon 3rd Monday of each month except December (2nd Monday).

Feds' 'Mr. Mediator' saluted in retirement

If anyone has earned a right to "rage against the machine" or kick loose his emotional traces in retirement, that would be Federal Commissioner Ron Sweet.

Yet he's bringing to retirement that same affable, helpful manner brought to 33 years - and nearly 4,000 negotiations! - as admired official of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS).

Headquartered in D.C. with offices around the nation, the FMCS is the independent government agency to maintain and promote labor peace, to serve as lips-sealed guide for labor and management in disputes, and to develop long-term strategies resolving enduring issues.

Sweet was considered excellent in all three roles, but the long-term particularly endears him to firms and unions here.

It was Sweet who played a

key role in developing the Construction Labor Management Council of Southeast Wisconsin (CLMC) and the Building Advantage program, also dedicated to bringing management and unions together.

Sweet is known locally for seldom being noticed. That was almost his aim in bringing resolution to hundreds of disputes. But nationally he is famous for a most historic accord.

That was in 1997 when the former industrial engineer at Ladish and later national union official was assigned by his FMCS bosses to step into the long constipated negotiations between United Parcel Service and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

The agreement brokered by Sweet ended the largest labor dispute (250,000 workers) in the past 50 years. Perhaps more important, recalls Sweet, it con-



Ron Sweet

vinced him that relationships and ongoing procedures to intersect issues and develop solutions were central regardless of the industry involved.

"People have to work together to identify the problems and they must value each other's input," he still says, though the search for consensus has sometimes proved contentious.

But not with Sweet at the table. Federal mediators push both sides while staying neutral. They will never testify for one side against the other. They work things out behind closed doors and they state progress or failure diplomatically without blame.

Sweet was "great at that," Milwaukee union officials say, "but always looking to solve

things," said another.

Lyle Balistreri shared many a negotiation table with Sweet, whom he calls a "great guy and good friend."

But make no mistake, said the president of the Milwaukee Building & Construction Trades Council, AFL-CIO. "Yes, he was calm and cool, but he was also no-nonsense. The way he conducted himself in mediation sets him apart from the others."

Mike Mueller, business manager at IBEW Local 494, recalls Sweet as the quiet man "keeping both sides focused and on the right track."

It is, frankly, a level of patience -- remember: 4,000 negotiations! -- and human resources skill that few possess. Seldom are mediators welcome or trusted by both sides. Sweet at the table seemed to change that.

Said John Topp, executive director of Building Advantage, "He had the ability to make all sides of the table understand the importance of working together."

Where does such ability come from? Many say it involves years of belief in cooperation, either learned on the management side or on the union side, to make a successful mediator.

In Sweet's case it was the union side, serving at Ladish as a shop steward and local president and then working on collective

bargaining for the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE). (Gregory J. Junemann, today the IFPTE international president, lives in the Milwaukee area and also got his start at Ladish.)

It was from those roles that the FMCS reached out to tap Sweet.

In the high-pressure world of collective bargaining -- and with labor laws that keep shifting ground because of partisan division - one thing seemed to keep him grounded: young people.

Sweet spent several nights every semester talking to labor relations and social classes at UWM, Marquette, Cardinal Stritch and other colleges about FMCS and his role, emphasizing the issue of rights that underlies a mediator's concern regardless of how the process might change.

He also organized labor management councils throughout Wisconsin, including the CLMC of Madison, Southeast Wisconsin, Milwaukee and the State of Wisconsin, as well as many in-plant and organizational labor and management councils.

His dedication won him the prestigious Melvin Lurie Labor-Management Prize for outstanding contributions from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Picketing the Boy Scouts?



Darn right, say members of IBEW Local 494, who spent the first week of March doing just that at the facility being built at Bluemound and Silvernail roads in Waukesha. Many unions have generously contributed to the Boy Scouts efforts of the Potawatomi council, say leaders of the local, but don't realize the contractor, MSI, is using that money to subcontract at sub-standard wages, measured by objective geographic standards (prevailing wage). The informational pickets intend to inform both unions and the general public to put pressure on the charity's leadership to do the honorable thing for working families, said Tim Hanson, business development director for the local.

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One candidate's experience is an issue: McCain

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

Comment

Democrats got a welcome gift on the road to the White House — Sen. John McCain's mouth.

That's proved something of a surprise, since everyone concedes that the GOP — after inexplicable agony — wound up choosing the only grown-up in their pack.

McCain is almost the epitome of the old conservative movement, which viewed maverick independence, even a quirky streak, as a badge of honor. The religious right bled that out of the party — neither Barry Goldwater nor Ronald Reagan would pass their modern litmus tests, as several Republican pundits have noted.

McCain was still standing after everyone else self-destructed, but remains suspect on the far right. On the far left his career as a serial conservative is unquestioned.

He's cozy with big business, always resistance to advances for workers, outspoken on ethics but easily blind-sided. He's likely to tell the poor, the crippled and jobless to suck it up, but he is readily forgiven ramrod responses on social issues because he can genuinely wrap himself in the flag.

Such paradoxes tempt independents and GOP moderates — until they start listening and thinking. To things like his victory speech in the Wisconsin GOP primary.

Even while Pervez Musharraf was being put on the shelf by voters for being too

much of an American stooge, McCain attacked Barack Obama for advocating action with reliable intelligence against terrorists in Musharraf's country, labeling the idea as an "inexperienced candidate who . . . suggested invading our ally, Pakistan."

Yet earlier that same Feb. 19th the CIA revealed it had done just what Obama suggested — gone into Pakistan without advance permission to take out a major al Qaeda operative. So just who is inexperienced?

Ten days later, the devout free trader hit both Obama and Hillary Clinton for demanding new negotiations from Mexico and Canada on NAFTA.

McCain raised the "fear card" that US voters have become so familiar with under the Republicans — and insulted a lot of Canadians in the process. He said his Democratic rivals were "jeopardizing Canada's military support" in Afghanistan by threatening to renegotiate NAFTA. (At first he actually said the Democrats had pledged to "unilaterally abrogate" NAFTA, but then conceded they had said no such thing.)

Many Canadians were unhappy that McCain suggested it was not moral fiber that kept them in Afghanistan but some sort of trade concern.

Canada's conservative prime minister — who also mocked the idea that he had any power to undermine Obama's campaign

— likes free trade as much as McCain does, but Canadians value their military commitment as a matter of belief and honor.

Nor could Stephen Harper enjoy the attention McCain had brought to Canada's trade policy, which has strong opponents in his country. Harper has taken advantage of the US' fading reputation (under Bush, supported by McCain). He has grown Canada into Latin America's second-largest investor, owning assets worth more than \$96 billion and doing more than \$1 billion a year in business with Cuba.

All McCain did was emphasize that he is afraid to talk change in NAFTA ("If I were president I would negotiate a free trade agreement with almost any country") and his opponents aren't.

Nor can McCain get away with calling his fellow senators "cut and run" Democrats. Neither had backed a "date certain" — just a committed exit from a war McCain believes in and most Americans don't.

He rattles more sabers at Iran (which has been the only victor in our invasion) and is willing to stay in Iraq 100 years to prove the US is right.

His views have some credibility because of that heroism as a prisoner of war in Vietnam. In that other war today's historians question, he stood as a beacon of American tenacity — and such courage in the face of brutality

may explain his defiance of his own party and president for any weakening of ethical standards on torture. (But how do you explain his silence to Bush's signing statement that the president could ignore the torture law?)

Bravery doesn't equate with wisdom. If it did, the most decorated hero of World War II would be the natural president — Audie Murphy.

The bigger problem for voters is what McCain consistently believes in and why and where he shows chronic inconsistency.

He doesn't just oppose the Employee Free Choice Act but swings hard to mandate a federal ban on union security agreements (and prevent collective bargaining for airport screeners). For decades he has opposed virtually every bill that would help American workers and encourage unions, from adjustments to NAFTA to raising the minimum wage, from the concept of universal health care to his support of outsourcing government contracts and privatizing Medicare.

Whatever the virtues of his attacks on pork barrel spending, he used that outrage to crush \$1.6 billion in school construction funding aimed at the most dilapidated buildings and desperate communities — and he opposed reauthorizing the federal highway and transit program that provided a million prevailing wage jobs for Americans. The money he says we don't have for such work is wasted without question in our foreign wars. He

would be Bush's third-term on all these issues.

McCain also has problems of his own. More and more his reputation for opposing pork barrel lobbying runs counter to his tight involvement with lobbyists (many serving key positions in his campaign) and brings reminders of the "Keating Five" days that so damaged his reputation and propelled him into campaign finance reform.

(Along with fellow journalists, I am unhappy that the New York Times allowed a few salacious remarks from his aides — worrying about McCain's relationship with a blonde lobbyist nine years ago — to sidetrack a needed clearing of McCain's historical record. The focus should have been his long, too-close friendships with lobbyists and big money as he led Senate committees doling out taxpayer money.)

It's hard to envision a candidate so demeaned by Bush forces in 2000 seeking to embrace both their positions and ad campaigners eight years later. Yet he has, almost obliterating the McCain his fans remember.

Those Bush tax cuts he once criticized at length for disproportionately favoring the rich? Well, today he embraces them, transparently to gain the conservative vote. Those religious leaders he criticized in 2000 as "agents of intolerance" he now curries favors from.

No candidate can be responsible for all the views of the people who endorse him, but McCain has weakened the values he once seemed to embody.

Obama, for instance, did not seek and quickly "rejected" and "denounced" support from Louis Farrakhan, whose anti-Semitic remarks and provocative statements had received wide play.

Yet McCain sought the endorsement and shared the stage with prominent televangelist John Hagee, who has run a San Antonio megachurch with particularly disturbing speech. It was not just flip remarks about women and slavery but open statements that the Catholic Church conspired with Nazis against the Jews and that Hurricane Katrina was God's retribution on homosexuals. McCain, stating that he does not share all the views, accepted the endorsement. No rejection nor renouncement here.

McCain's mouth has become a weapon of self-destruction, revealing how he thinks, where he mentally slips and where his free associations lead him (Beach Boys equal Barbara Ann equals bomb Iran).

What's still needed is a candid admission. If the "Straight Talk Express" has derailed, how far off the track is he willing to slide to win?

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Congress takes advantage of health care anger

Reported in the media at the start of March, an intensive study confirmed what many seniors already had discovered: The private plans touted as Medicare reform are

not a big bargain for seniors. In fact these Medicare Advantage come-ons cost seniors far more than traditional Medicare for dubious and nonexistent "advantage."

A healthy coincidence

Almost accidentally during a talk with Leon Burzynski, president of the Wisconsin chapter of the Alliance for Retired Americans, I discovered he had done the same thing I had in 2003 - resign from an organization that had some good sides, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP).

It's not just that Burzynski is devoted to his own organization, which is better on the issues. (Check it out for yourself for information on Medicare and other senior issues at www.wisconsinara.org and see our story on Page 11.) The ARA is a constituent group member of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council.

Five years ago he and I were both troubled by the AARP's

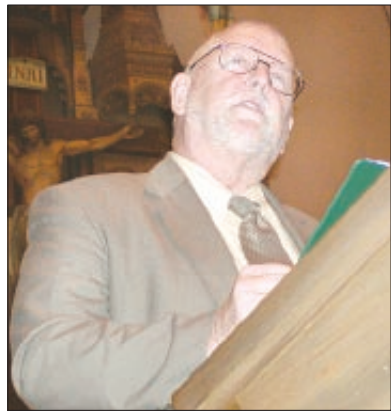
last-minute support and lobbying push for Bush's Medicare prescription drug plan - the one with the huge gap in the middle, the one that not only has proved an enormous gift to private companies but really opened the door to the Medicare Advantage plans.

It was AARP's support that actually tipped the balance to get the legislation passed. Democrats who were on the fence trusted the largest and best known lobbying group for older citizens, 35 million strong. The AARP had often played its research right down the middle, but this time, inexplicably if not stupidly, it described the bill as a "good first step" to fixing the nation's health care system and providing drugs for seniors. In reality it turned into the Pandora's Box that has made health care solutions worse.

The motives of the AARP seemed suspect then and more so now. It's become a money machine with special deals for seniors and a slew of products from auto insurance to reverse mortgage -- and now, wouldn't you know, its own branded Medical Advantage program.

Comparing notes, Burzynski and I found we quit membership over exactly the same reason -- that stand on the Medicare drug bill. Later we learned we were hardly alone. AARP hasn't said how many resigned over the issue, but try a million -- and counting.

-- Dominique Paul Noth, Labor Press Editor



Leon Burzynski during 2007's Labor in the Pulpits.

Meanwhile, the sales tactics of these Medicare Advantage plans have led to a Senate investigation chaired by visibly angry Sen. Herb Kohl (D-Wis.).

The report comes from the federal government itself - the Government Accountability Office (GAO). It found many people in private Medicare plans face higher costs for home health care, nursing homes and some hospital stays than government-run Medicare program.

So now the government will spend an estimated \$54 billion in extra costs for Medicare Advantage beneficiaries from 2009 through 2012.

About one in five of the 44 million Medicare beneficiaries - 9 million people - are in the private Medicare Advantage plans. If you're 65 or even approaching 65, your mail box will confirm how endless seem the number of these plans and their promotional ploys, particularly with an April deadline for many enrollments.

Edward Coyle, executive director of the Alliance for Retired Americans (the good people -- see our sidebar on the AARP), says its 3.5 million -member retiree organization has recorded "countless stories from seniors about how Advantage programs have ultimately cost them more or failed them in their time of need."

It has already been documented that Medicare Advantage plans cost taxpayers 12% more than traditional Medicare and that all Medicare beneficiaries

have had to foot the bill, paying an additional \$2 on top of their already rising premiums to subsidize these private insurance companies.

This entire practice brought a strong reaction in March from the chair of the Senate Special Committee on Aging. Kohl viewed with skepticism a proposal put forth by America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP) to put a stop to the deceptive and confusing marketing practices employed in the sale of Medicare Advantage plans to seniors.

"We've heard pledges and promises from this group before," said Chairman Kohl, "but where's the follow-through?"

"We can no longer wait for these companies to clean up their act while seniors continue to be duped and misled. It's time we give states more room to step up regulation and enforcement of the insurance industry in this arena."

The aging committee's ongoing investigation of private Medicare plans and providers has uncovered such questionable sales practices as removing seniors from traditional Medicare without their knowledge, signing seniors up for plans they cannot afford, and misleading seniors regarding which physicians and hospitals accept the plan.

The GAO found thousands of Medicare Advantage recipients are projecting higher costs for home health services and inpatient services. On top of

those increases, many of the annual cost limits don't include some cancer drugs, some mental health services and home health care expenses.

Among the more than 25,000 people who responded in the AFL-CIO Health Care for America Survey, many said Medicare Advantage plans cost them more -- and provided detailed accounts of being misled or flat lied to.

Said Coyle: "For the GAO to independently, definitively show that these plans are more expensive for most beneficiaries leaves no other explanation for continuing these overpayments than that the president has consciously decided to sacrifice older Americans' health care needs for the profits of large corporations."

Coyle criticized the president for "attacking the most vulnerable - seniors who need Medicare to afford to see a doctor - while at the same time giving billions in subsidies to insurance companies to run privatized Medicare plans."

Coyle added, "While many retirees continue to pay more for their prescriptions, the administration bans Medicare from negotiating volume discounts with the big drug companies."

Incidentally the online AFL-CIO Health Survey cited has attracted a remarkable 25,000 participants. The AFL-CIO intends to present the results to elected officials.

So climb aboard at www.afl-cio.org/issues/healthcare/survey/

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Sworn in by Lt. Gov. Barbara Lawton as the newest member of the executive council, representing the CBTU, Anthony Rainey of UAW Local 469 (at left) made a tie of the \$1 union buttons being sold by the council as a fund-raiser March 5. BELOW: Even labor-familiar veterans on the County Board went through the COPE interviews in March to earn new endorsements, including Marina Dimitrijevic of District 4 and (below left) James White of District 1



The oldest and youngest guests at the Serb Hall open house were Taniya Marie Robinson, 9, and Vel Phillips, Milwaukee rights pioneer born in the 1920s. Taniya is granddaughter of AFSCME retiree and election activist Rosemarie McDowell.



TOP: Willie Hines, veteran alderman in the 15 District and president of the Milwaukee Common Council, stopped by March 5 to thank the union delegates for their support. LEFT: A new voice for the County Board, Christopher Larson, has inspired strong labor backing in District 14. BELOW: Others backed (from top) are newcomers Jan Balistrieri in District 9, Dan Wycklendt in District 15 and incumbent John Weishan in District 16.



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It's an important race for the only open seat on the Milwaukee Common Council. The top vote getter out of eight candidates in the Feb. 19 primary is still doing the doors and the phones in East Side District 3. At least he and his photographer met a fellow dog lover – Susie Seidelman.

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APRIL 1 VOTER GUIDE 2008

AFL-CIO MILWAUKEE LABOR COUNCIL CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENTS

COPE fills in the choices

Opposed or not on April 1, a number of incumbents filled out questionnaires and offered themselves for March interviews by the Committee on Political Education (COPE) of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council.

A few incumbents who probably would have won support did not go through these mandatory steps, but most did.

In only one primary race did an endorsed candidate fail to get through -- and that led to a new preference by COPE in March for the surviving challenger, Dan Wycklendt, over incumbent Lynne De Bruin in District 15 of the Milwaukee County Board.

One of the focuses of March endorsements by COPE were country board seats that were in contention: incumbents John Weishan (District 16), Marina Dimitrijevic (District 4) and Elizabeth Cogg-Jones (District 10). COPE had previously endorsed Christopher Larson in District 14 (an open seat caused by Richard Nyklewicz's decision not to run again when his term expires on April 20) and Jan Balistrieri, opposing incumbent Paul Cesarz in District 9.

A strange case had emerged in District 1. COPE interviewed both candidates and endorsed incumbent James White for April 1, keenly aware that this is in a race that should never have existed. There will be no name on the ballot for this seat and only the name with the most write-ins can win. A mistake by White's supporters in gathering nomination names leaves the ballot blank - and opened the door to a belated

A correction

An erroneous terminology has been used several times to describe why Richard Nyklewicz is not on the ballot for District 14 for the first time in 32 years. The editor apologizes.

The County Board supervisor simply decided not to run again when his term expires April 20. No resignation or retirement should have been implied for the supervisor who was first elected to represent the district when he was 20 years old.



Ashanti Hamilton, District 1



Robert Baumann, District 4



Michael Murphy, District 10

challenge by Theo Lipscomb (also interviewed). White has asked his friends in labor to be part of a considerable organized effort to emerge No. 1 in District 1.

Facing no opposition but

also going through the endorsement process was Supervisors Peggy West (District 12), Toni Clark (District 2) and Michael Mayo (District 7).

Somewhat similar choices exist at the City of Milwaukee Common Council. COPE has given strong endorsement and labor volunteers have gone to work throughout the East Side District 3 to champion Pat Flaherty, who came in first easily in the Feb. 19th primary and now faces Nik Kovac. That was the only Common Council seat where the incumbent has chosen not to run.

COPE had previously backed a number of incumbents challenged in primary aldermanic contests. Each came through easily and each now faces a solitary challenger. Endorsed are Willie Wade (District 7), Joe Dudzik (District 11), Terry Witkowski (District 13), and T. Anthony Zielinski (District 14).

Also endorsed (even though some had no primary battle or even an opponent) were Joe Davis (District 2), Robert Baumann (District 4), Jim Bohl (District 5) and Michael Murphy (District 10).

March interviews added two more incumbents to the COPE recommendations: Ashanti Hamilton (District 1) and Willie Hines (District 15).

But COPE made no choice in the talked-about District 6, where Milele Cogg emerged in close second place in a crowded primary and the incumbent, Michael McGee, was behind bars and unavailable for interviews.

APRIL 1 GENERAL ELECTION

Wisconsin Supreme Court

Incumbent **Louis Butler**

Milwaukee County

County Executive: **Lena Taylor**

Circuit Court Branch 40 (open seat)

Dual Endorsement: **Rebecca Dallet and Jeffrey Norman**

Milwaukee County Board

District 1 (requires write-in): **James White** (incumbent)

District 2: **Toni Clark** (incumbent)

District 4: **Marina Dimitrijevic** (incumbent)

District 7: **Michael Mayo** (incumbent)

District 9 (vs incumbent Paul Cesarz): **Jan Balistrieri**

District 10: **Elizabeth Cogg-Jones** (incumbent)

District 12: **Peggy West** (incumbent)

District 14 (an open seat): **Christopher Larson**

District 15 (vs incumbent Lynne De Bruin): **Dan Wycklendt**

District 16: **John Weishan** (incumbent)

District 18 (unopposed): **Johnny Thomas**

City of Milwaukee

Mayor: **Tom Barrett** (incumbent)

Treasurer: **Wayne Whittow** (incumbent)

Common Council

1st District: **Ashanti Hamilton** (incumbent)

2nd District (unopposed): **Joe Davis** (incumbent)

3rd District (open seat): **Patrick Flaherty**

4th District: **Bob Baumann** (incumbent)

5th District: **Jim Bohl** (incumbent)

7th District: **Willie Wade** (incumbent)

10th District: **Michael Murphy** (incumbent)

11th District: **Joe Dudzik** (incumbent)

13th District: **Terry Witkowski** (incumbent)

14th District: **T. Anthony Zielinski** (incumbent)

15th District: **Willie Hines** (incumbent)

How the process works: Recommendations for state offices are made through the Wisconsin AFL-CIO, of which the Milwaukee council is an active member. There is only one such race on the April 1 ballot and the endorsement of incumbent Justice Louis Butler was unanimous.

In Milwaukee, candidates must complete a process of questionnaires and interviews even to be considered, and recommendations require a two-thirds agreement on the Committee on Political Education (COPE), more than two dozen members of all the unions, locals and constituency groups of the labor council. All COPE choices were approved by the delegates to the council March 5.

The choices are certainly not binding, as union members frequently demonstrate. But they represent considerable scrutiny on working family issues, campaign commitment and support of key labor goals through an intense process. Union members are also one of the most committed groups in the nation to turn up at the polls - in this case from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday, April 1.

Interviews took place before the Feb. 19 primary and continued into March, expanding previously announced choices.

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Lena

From Page 1

Walker's claim to have held the line on property taxes (each year he's started anew with the higher level the County Board had to pass to save his butt), suggesting what is really lacking is "a sense of priority, of leadership."

She also asks citizens to honestly look at the nation's political landscape and what it could mean for Milwaukee County, since she would have the ear and the belief of the federal delegation, the state officials and the local county municipalities -- something Walker can't pretend to have.

Her best points, of course, have been provided by Walker. It's truly hard to find anyone anymore - except on talk radio or in rightwing covens -- who believes in his policies

One of his big fans, radio host Jeff Wagner on WTMJ, lamented on the air that the audit reports on the huge decline of Milwaukee bus riders and revenues "were a gift to Taylor" from the Journal Sentinel. That was a pretty wild interpretation, since mass transit initiatives have led to more jobs and economic growth in other cities, something the report underlined in assessing why it hadn't happened here.

There were only glancing notices that it has largely been Walker's raise in rates, cutbacks in routes and stubbornness about even talking about light rail that caused the failure here -- and now looks to lose us \$91 million in long dormant federal money.

As we went to press -- and as radio hosts well know -- the newspaper hasn't credit Taylor with the gains even nonpartisan polls show, nor done an attentive job in covering this race.

Still sore that it missed the pension scandal, the newspaper has rarely tied together the obvious deterioration over six years of the county and its services and

the mismanagement by Walker. Only when residents in county care have died or been abandoned have journalists found an effective way to connect the dots.

Yet most stories have allowed Walker to fudge off any problem, to joke (as he now tries to do in TV ads) that it's unfair to blame the guy in charge.

He has gotten away with this punt and pass game for years, always proposing schemes that escaped personal responsibility (let's create a taxing district!), resisted public input (such as a referendum on sales tax) and has forced every County Board to rescue essential services in the parks, the courts, transit, corrections and health.

Now the chickens have come home in federal, state and independent reports and audits.

For print and even TV journalists it has become a chorus hard to ignore, hard to pretend, for instance, that the transit failure doesn't reflect unwillingness to challenge his fellow conservatives in surrounding counties and in Madison.

The last time the local media missed this badly weeks before an election in Wisconsin was with a fellow named Obama.

Walker does have a four to one money advantage, so he can waste a lot of it on ads looking for scapegoats, on ads changing targets when a goofy concept doesn't work, and on ads that try to label Taylor the candidate of "special Madison interests."

Just which "special interests in Madison" stifled Milwaukee? It was the Assembly Republicans that Walker had once been a part of. They stripped from the state budget millions of dollars to help Wisconsin's only first-class city.

Walker, who constantly complains that the state should do more, didn't say a word.

(Actually, the only rescue

came from Taylor. Over in the Senate, as other county officials have conceded with gratitude, she led the charge to save millions to salvage county transit.)

Nor did the media pick up on the energy and solutions Taylor was combining in her campaign.

She's running for county executive while rushing back to Madison for committee work - without missing a beat -- but all that has heightened her antenna for how the problems interlock and can be solved by governments working together.

That IS the special interest she brings back from Madison -- how legislation on corrections, education, juvenile justice, etc., should directly help Milwaukee, and how many opportunities are created and currently wasted for deeper cooperation and alternative funding.

In interviews she points out that she was born, raised and went to high school, church and community activities in Milwaukee and still lives on the same block she grew up on.

"The straw that broke the camel's back" and made her decide to run, she told Riverwest Currents, "was when I was in my childhood park. I was riding my bike with my neighbor and there were weeds literally up to my knees, coming up through the cracks in the sidewalk. I'm like, 'What is going on here?'"

Now, she says, "I'm on a mission to make sure my son has a place to grow up, that he has parks he can play in, a transit system that's going to allow him to connect with the opportunities that exist throughout the entire region, not just the county."

She's also the one candidate who actually graduated college and returned to Milwaukee right afterward to start her own law and real estate practice before winning seats in the Assembly and Senate.

It is the year for people power, she says - and not a bad year to be an active Democrat.

"People are ready for change -- they definitely are," she said, "but they want someone who is going to think out of the box, to bring the solutions."

Given the winds of change roaring through the country, "I intend to make sure Milwaukee County is appreciated."



US Sen. Feingold and State Sen. Lena Taylor have a private chat at his birthday party. They could be commiserating over mad travel schedules. His is well known - but for months, Taylor has been speeding home from her sessions in Madison to do interviews (below), seek endorsements and funds, meet with citizens, participate in forums and debates - and then speed back for more work on legislation and finance.



How to get involved

The Milwaukee Area Labor Council has made Lena Taylor the centerpiece of its cavalry charge -- mailing, phone banks, neighborhood walks, funding events -- but the unions are not neglecting applying the same devotion to other important races.

Statewide, there is the need to return Louis Butler to the Wisconsin Supreme Court. At the county, there are potential allies and good partners for a new county executive - to name just one, newcomer Christopher Larson leading the race in District 14.

For the city, in the East Side District 3, there is a robust campaign for a proven outsider who knows how to convince the insiders at City Hall in citizen campaigns - and Patrick Flaherty's other edge is that he knows how to handle budgets responsibly.

These are among the races of major importance. Schedules have been set up to accommodate union volunteers to work on their own, or have their local "adopt a shift."

All phone banks and walks will work out of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council office, 633 S. Hawley Road, Milwaukee, WI 53214. The exception is a massive Rally and Walk to Get Out the Vote starting at 9 a.m. Saturday, March 29, at the Laborers Local 113 Hall, located at 6310 W. Appleton Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53210.

Except for Good Friday through Easter Sunday -- and the Friday before the election -- either phone banking or doing doors, or both, will continue through Election Day.

To sign up, contact AFL-CIO Labor 2008 organizer for the region, Steve Kwaterski, at (414) 719-5190, or MALC Vice-President Annie Wacker at (414) 510-8724.

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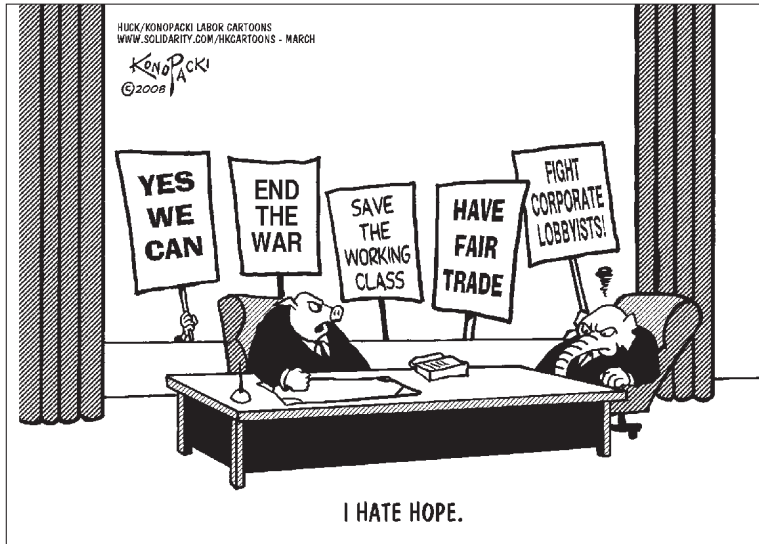
New global resolve on women's rights

One hundred years after the first International Women's Day, the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO at its California meeting resolved to support a sweeping effort to end discrimination against women worldwide.

The AFL-CIO pledged to support the Global Campaign for Decent Work, Decent Life for Women, a two-year initiative launched by the 168-million member International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and Global Union Federations.

These groups advocate for decent work for women and gender equality in labor policies and agreements. They also seek gender equality in trade union structures, policies and activities and significant increases in the number of women organized into unions and in elected positions.

"I can think of no better way to honor those 15,000 women who marched down the streets of New York 100 years ago than to ensure their legacy lives on," AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said, referring to a legendary effort that launched



world recognition of women's rights.

"This campaign is an opportunity to build a better union movement, and ultimately, a better, more inclusive world that makes the most of the talents of all its citizens."

"I am extremely proud to stand with my sisters and brothers around the globe to join hands and forces in the fight for a more equitable world for our daughters and sons," AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Arlene

Holt-Baker said. "There is much work still to be done."

While 40% of world employment is made up of women, they still:

Earn 12 to -60% less than men around the globe. In the United States, women are paid 77.6% of men's hourly earnings for comparable work.

Make up 60% of the 550 million working poor.

Are concentrated in low-paid, unprotected, temporary or casual work.

On Oct. 7, 2008 -- the World Day for Decent Work -- the AFL-CIO will highlight the necessity of passing the Employee Free Choice Act as critical to ensuring decent work in the United States.

A report detailing statistics in 63 countries around the world can be accessed at www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/gap-1.pdf.

Butler

From Page 1

cussion allowed under judicial ethics when the candidates themselves speak.

Butler had been making it clear he was talking as much to his own busy but uncontrollable backers such as the Greater Wisconsin Committee.

(Though credit the group with thorough timeline research -- it had figured out the cause of Gableman's appointment to the remote circuit bench 300 miles from where he worked: A fund raiser for then-Gov. McCallum, who appointed him over recommended choices. The committee has been clobbering him for that in TV ads, and for exaggerating his record.)

But Gableman prevaricated on his own third party ads. His campaign was relying on heavy advertising by such groups as the Wisconsin Club for Growth (an offshoot of a Republican right-wing national group) and Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce.

Only five paragraphs down did the story reveal that Gableman "did not join in Butler's call for third parties to stay out of the race," nor did the article confront how third party ads were essential to Gableman's campaign against a more experienced and far more known and admired justice.

The ads for Gableman continued a familiar pattern by the WMC to make the Supreme Court sound like the Earp posse (though criminal law, much less criminal trials, is only a smidge of what the

court does).

Even Newsweek has joined the outrage against the third party ads supporting Gableman. It's not just another story making Wisconsin a national laughing-stock. Newsweek also noted the uncanny resemblance of the unscrupulous attack on Butler to a work of fiction -- John Grisham's latest novel, "The Appeal," which details the underhanded tactics and lies by business groups trying to upset a liberal-conservative balance on Louisiana's top court.

The article is at www.newsweek.com/id/119952.

On March 12, a finally exasperated Butler told Gableman to stop "running a misleading and dishonest campaign" that demeaned the dignity of the collective court. Gableman said it was an attack on his integrity, to which Butler supporters said "high time."

Gableman actually has little in his background on interpreting constitutional nuances and legislative laws -- or even standing up to criminals.

But third party ads against Butler may be vital to distract voters from Gableman's judicial naiveté -- and the ads do bulk up his resume by commingling his work as a judge with his roving career as a prosecutor.

If Gableman as a judge had gone "toe to toe" with the litany of "arsonists, sexual predators, domestic abusers and white collar criminals" described in one ad, he would have locked up everyone in Burnett County (population 15,674).

-- Dominique Paul Noth

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PIN PALS	74	73
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8 BALLS	56	91
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DON BOOTON	191
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GEORGE BARAK	182

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DEL GROSS	582
BOB WAGNER	566
DAN LAACK	564
DAN KNIPPEL	529
DON BOOTON	510
EUGENE HERRICK	509
GEORGE BARAK	502

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PHYLISS NAVARRETE	477
JOYCE KNIPPEL	457

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JOYCE KNIPPEL	156
PHYLISS NAVARRETE	152
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Calendar

For updated master list of events,
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Thursday, March 20, through Tuesday, April 1

Get Out the Vote!

Volunteer for phone banks, walks and other election involvement for endorsed candidates.

Centered at Milwaukee Area Labor Council
633 S. Hawley Rd. See Pages 6, 7

Tuesday, March 25

Launch of Major Annual Zeidler Lecture Series

Jeremy Scahill, author of "Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army"

7 p.m. Centennial Hall next to

Downtown Public Library.

Free. See Page 2

Wednesday, March 26

Executive Board, 2 p.m.

Yatchak Hall, 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Tuesday, April 1

General Election, 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Find your polling place
and MAKE SURE TO VOTE

Wednesday, April 2

Delegate Meeting

Introduction of New Expansion

Into Ozaukee and Washington Counties.

Milwaukee Area Labor Council AFL-CIO

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

Saturday, April 26

Labor History: Perspectives on Immigration

27th annual conference, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

UWM Golda Meir Library.

Monday, April 28

Workers Memorial Day

5 p.m., Downtown Milwaukee,

Zeidler Union Square Park

NLRB imposes election delay to probe Capital Returns case

Capital Returns, whose uncaring treatment of workers was the subject of a Labor Press expose in December, is now facing a formal unionizing effort brought by workers who want the company to pay attention to conditions, safety, health and pay.

Receiving sufficient cards from workers asking to be represented by USW (the United Steelworkers), the NLRB scheduled an election for March 6.

But Irv Gottschalk, executive director of NLRB Region 30 located in Milwaukee, confirmed that the election has been "postponed indefinitely" while the federal agency takes testimony on unfair labor practices and other charges brought by the USW.

The NLRB will also seek the company's response and its hearing officers may initiate questions of their own as more information comes in, and more cases are heading the NLRB way.

Community rallies at the plant have also led to charges against the company for its behavior, but they have also led to online videos by the workers' supporters to tell the story.

The most recent video on youtube, after three minutes setting the scene, brings to the forefront how many of these low-wage workers are African American women with children, some pregnant, handling the medical and waste substances on the processing lines.

Actual workers describe the conditions while representatives of USW and the Milwaukee Area Labor Council make it clear they won't quit until things change.

The video is at

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=jaipETS9sPQ> or go to the workerjust category on the site to choose among the existing videos.

The NLRB case is emerging as almost a textbook for the USW on why the Employee Free Choice Act is needed in the US to prevent games when workers try to organize.

Even clarifying just who is in this workforce has become a battle. The numbers have been lower than 300 in some NLRB discussions (excluding guards and office workers not part of the USW effort or the NLRB concern). That gave the USW a majority of workers requesting the union - until the company somehow recounted.

Then the workforce numbers jumped above 400 in lists exchanged with the union and the NLRB. (These are lists that all parties keep private.)

Gottschalk confirmed that a new list will have to be generated at the end of the investigation.

How many work on the line?

This could also be a numbers game both the city and state are interested in, having provided Capital Returns some serious financial aid -- making available at least \$3.6 million in response to pledges by Capital Returns when it moved to a new home in the old Evinrude plant at 6101 N. 64th St.

The money -- a mixture of forgivable loans, good-term loans and tax credits offering deductions for additional workers -- all required Capital Returns to increase its hiring of residents.

So the company is obviously on a considerable financial hook to add specific numbers of residents to the workforce over several years.

Yet one of the unfair labor practices filed by the USW claims the employer and its

agents unlawfully threatened to close the facility if the employees elected a union. It never mentioned to workers the depth of financial support it receives from taxpayers, and the penalty for abandoning these arrangement, all of which turn threats of leaving hollow.

The loans and tax credits also require the company to report additions to its workforce, which makes the confusion about the number of processing workers seem strange. Workers say there has been a big turnover, and Labor Press found staffing service agencies that were looking for workers for Capital Returns.

Labor Press research also found an amazing range of government regulations and rules in play that extend beyond the money sources -- the state Department of Commerce and the City Department of Development and its related corporation. The concerns about safety, health and environmental standards not only involve the state's DWD (Department of Workforce Development) and DNR (Department of Natural Resources) and the city's new Workforce Investment Board, which lists Capital Returns as a supporting company.

The regulations also touch on the federal DOL (Department of Labor), OSHA, EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and even the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

The old Evinrude plant that taxpayers helped Capital Returns move into, in exchange for those promises to increase the resident workforce, is a large facility of several buildings that stretches around the block.

The company apparently tried to shepherd workers out the back door during one organizing effort, which is one of the issues of complaint the NLRB is looking into. -- *Dominique Paul Noth*

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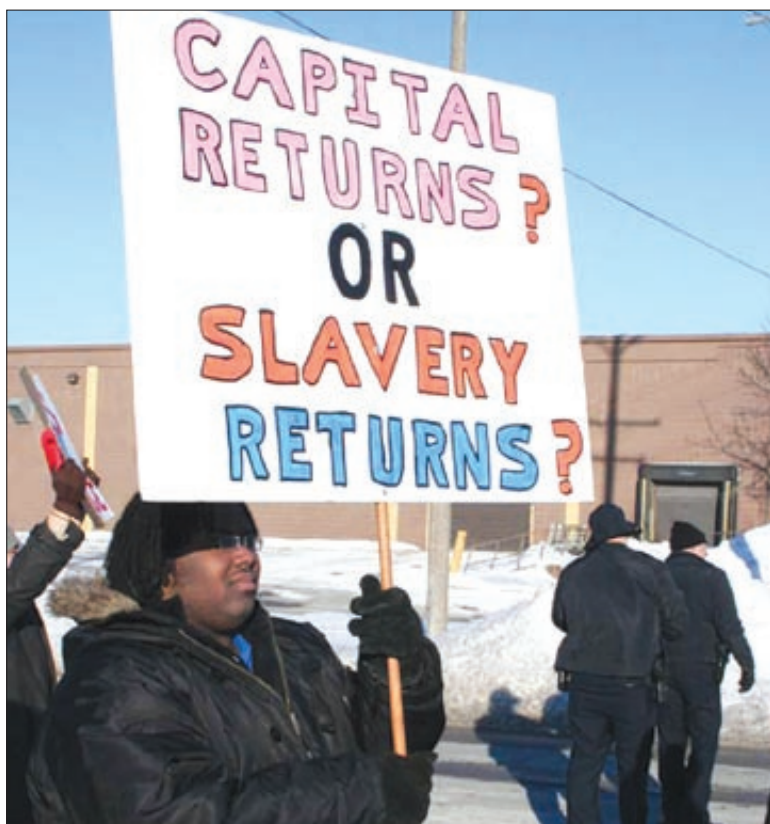
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The faith community joins workers and unions in a Capital Returns protest Feb. 20 outside the plant.

Justice issues dominate breakfast

By Robin Thompson
Special to Labor Press

A prayer breakfast March 6 brought together an interfaith contingent of clergy, lay leaders, union members and social activists from the Milwaukee area who wanted to learn about issues facing low wage workers in the city - and responded to spirited campaigns in which they can get involved.

The Faith Community for Worker Justice in collaboration with Voces de la Frontera held the Interfaith Prayer Breakfast for Human Rights. The Rev. Tim Berlew of Memorial United Methodist Church, who understands the role of faith traditions in promoting worker justice, warmly opened his Greenfield church for the event, which featured special speakers on issues and on the philosophy of social

engagement. It also featured chants from the Koran and readings from the Bible and Torah that discussed the importance of treating people with dignity.

Faith Community for Worker Justice showed a video of the rally that took place on Feb 20 outside of Capital Returns (while employees were escorted out the backdoor to avoid giving them a chance to receive literature on the steelworkers campaign).

The company's behavior brought union complaints and an escalating NLRB investigation.

The NLRB has postponed indefinitely the election set for March 6 while it gathers facts. See Page 10.

The video depicts people at the rally and provides commentary from the organizers of United Steel Workers, the Milwaukee Area Labor Council and current and past workers at Capital Returns. That video is available at www.youtube.com/workerjust.

The faith breakfast also heard a most catastrophic story -- that of two women who worked for Star Packaging in Whitewater, Wis.

In late August of 2006 Star Packaging was raided by sheriff's deputies who had called in

immigration. Some 25 workers were detained. Only five remain in the country awaiting their court date.

When the workers were detained they were constantly told they were criminals. Being here without papers is a civil offense, so on what grounds are these individuals criminals? The fact that they entered the United States to find work and in the process improved the economy, paid taxes and rented houses? These are not criminal acts. As one worker told the breakfast, "The real criminals are out on the streets."

The prayer breakfast concluded with the Rev. Jessica Vasquez Torres from the Chicago Interfaith Worker Justice petitioning action amongst the religious community. She asked the diverse group to no longer sit around waiting for change, but to go out and create it.

"I believe more than anything, the interfaith prayer breakfast was a time to build relationships between religious leaders and community and labor organizations," noted Berlew. "In that we were successful."

The author is an intern with the Milwaukee faith community.

Seniors warned not to lose stimulus rebate money

A warning to seniors has been issued by the Alliance for Retired Americans: Many who never had to file a federal tax return had better do it for 2007 by the April 15 IRS deadline. The reason is the economic stimulus package passed by Congress and signed by the president on Feb. 13.

Seniors who are required to file a federal tax return for 2007 will not have to do anything more to qualify.

But in 2008, up to 20 million Americans who rely primarily on Social Security income qualify for an economic stimulus rebate check from the federal government. Generally, people need more than \$3,000 in 2007 income to qualify for a stimulus rebate.

Many seniors who do not earn income through current employment can qualify for a stimulus check, if their Social Security benefits, Veterans

Affairs (VA) benefits, and railroad retirement benefits equal at least \$3,000 annually. That's lower than normally qualifies for paying taxes, leading people in this category not bothering to file, some for many years. But now these seniors must file to receive an economic stimulus check ranging from \$300 to \$600.

To emphasize -- if they don't file a 2007 federal tax return on IRS Form 1040 or 1040A (short form), they won't get the stimulus check.

The IRS encourages filing a return by the regular April 15 deadline to get the rebate check. Those filing later than April 15, with or without a tax-filing extension, may delay receipt of the rebate check. Those who qualify for a stimulus check will receive one by the end of 2008, if they file by October 15, 2008. But no rebate checks will be issued after 2008.

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program provides help to low- and moderate income taxpayers. Call 1-800-906-9887 for assistance.

The nearest free tax preparation locations are available by calling the IRS at 1-800-829-1040.

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