



Whatever your choice, make sure to Vote 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday

Is Voter ID law on or off?

As Labor Press went to the printers, two eloquent decisions from state judges determined citizens did not have to show government issued photo IDs to vote. Two other serious challenges are also in federal court. Yet the GOP state Atty. Gen. Van Hollen insists he will try to speed a reversal by the State Supreme Court, which has done the administration's bidding in the past. If that holds true, the justices might act barely in time to upset the April 3 apple cart.

So the safest advice to voters is listen to the news and be prepared. But it's annoying and dumfounding advice. Voting should face no stringent barriers - and the rulings found them, detailing a century of precedents along with modern evidence.

The high court would have to reverse its own history at injudicious speed. It has troubles of its own since Justice David Prosser faces violation of ethics for an episode involving a choke move against another justice. Its dysfunction has been so publicized that any decision in haste will be deeply suspect.

In reasonable times, the current injunctions hold and the stringent photo ID rules will not apply April 3. But since we don't seem to live in reasonable times, be prepared.

How to Vote April 3

Newly elect to Common Council



Eyon Biddle
District 15
City of Milwaukee



Ray Harmon
District 9
City of Milwaukee



Jose Perez
District 12
City of Milwaukee

Editorials

By Dominique Paul Noth, Labor Press Editor

Unquestionably -- extreme partisan division and rancor lead to exaggerations on both sides. But that shouldn't disguise some harsh realities. For instance, Gov. Walker's people keep claiming he is unfavorably singled out as the chief cause of the state's poor economic showing. They criticize blaming him for the failure to draw meaningful new business. His corporate supporters constantly harp that, maybe sometime soon, they will start adding jobs or grow revenue because his austerity measures are the right way to move the state forward.

It's reasonable sounding malarkey. Assuredly there are many factors at work in the state's problems. But when Walker's people and media start pointing out these complexities in order to blame them, forgive his policies or ask for "more time," well they're playing us for suckers. Or they are flat lying. Or prone to wishful thinking.

No wonder the contrary realists wind up crouching in defensive posture to protect their facts, wallets and crucial anatomical parts. They have to - the Walker side has that much money and media control to spread malarkey.

To blame people who stand up to Walker for not just bending over and accepting his actions -- that's simply foolish because it is hardly unions alone who now realize he's plunged us in the wrong direction..

Astute economic observers such as Institute for Wisconsin's Future executive director and top researcher, Karen Royster and Jack Norman, recently took to print to rebut a Journal Sentinel editorial saying Walker was not the chief problem.

He is, they reasoned:

"Trying to squeeze people out of the political process creates an atmosphere of tension and distrust - not a big draw for potential corporate citizens.

"Walker's botched policies have contracted the Wisconsin economy. Pay cuts and layoffs statewide have reduced disposable income resulting in less demand for goods and services. This has slowed production and stifled job creation.

"Wisconsin needs to reverse direction. State investments in human capital and physical infrastructure jump-start economic activity. It's time to initiate policies that generate more state revenue and use those funds to upgrade our communities, our schools and our skills."

This is the economic call to change course that underlies the statewide effort to reclaim Wisconsin and recall the governor in pending elections in May or June.

No, it's not Walker alone. But the state sure will start picking up faster without him.

Newly elect to County Board



David Bowen
District 10
Milwaukee County



Tracey Corder
District 18
Milwaukee County



Russell Stamper II
District 5
Milwaukee County

Newly elect to judicial/financial posts



Hannah Dugan
Judge, Branch 23
Milwaukee County Circuit Court



Carolina Stark
Judge, Branch 17
Milwaukee County Circuit Court



Scott Manske
Milwaukee County Comptroller
New Elected Position

To re-elect to Milwaukee leadership

Only pictured are those incumbents facing opponents on April 3



Milele Coggs
City District 6



Dimitrijevic
County Dist. 4



Theo Lipscomb
County Dist. 1



Michael Murphy
City District 10



Romo-West
County Dist. 12



Tony Zielinski
City District 14

Walker loses death grip on Wisconsin government

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
Labor Press Editor

The Wisconsin State Senate concluded its 2011-2012 legislative session March 15 -- and a day later the world changed, in the sense of the stranglehold the GOP had on Wisconsin government. It evaporated with the midnight resignation of GOP Sen. Pam Galloway.

Instantly that threw the Senate into a 16-16 tie, which means that even with a prominently Republican Assembly, the one-party hold was broken and little can move forward unless the sides start truly working with each other - something democracy has always demanded but Gov. Walker's troops resisted.

The speculation heated up as our newspaper went to press about the political consequences, which now stretch from the recall of the governor himself to the fate of the heavy-handed GOP redistricting tactics.

Galloway was the target of a recall senate election now scheduled for May 8 and even though her name will be off the ballot, the contest goes on and the winner becomes the new senator - at least until we do it all over again in the November election.

In fact, all these Senate recall contests are again up for

grabs in November. (Whoever is elected governor stays in office through 2014.)

The GOP is recruiting someone to run May 8 for her seat - but there are actually two GOP candidates in this Wausau area district, both currently in the Assembly. If both decide to get into it, May 8 turns into a primary with a finale duplicating the expected date of the governor's recall, June 5. Rep. Jerry Petrowski of Marathon is considered by GOP insiders as the more popular while Rep. Mary Williams of Medford as we went to press said she was flattered to be courted but happy where she was.

It probably doesn't matter, because the lone Democratic opponent in this race not only has 29,000 recall signatures on her side but also great popularity in the Assembly and a proven reputation for outspokenness and getting things done. That's Rep. Donna Seidel, right now the strongest presence in a district that used to be in Democratic hands.

To many observers Seidel's strength was a key factor in Galloway's decision to leave, while others take her at her word that illness in her family forced her decision despite the suspicious timing. The likelihood is a



Pam Galloway's surprise resignation catapulted veteran legislator Mark Miller of the minority Democrats into co-leadership of the Wisconsin Senate.

mixture of causes. It all makes Galloway one of the shortest-serving members of the legislature since she rode into office on that extreme conservative wave in 2010 unlikely to be repeated.

The senate is now more than in blockage. It will have co-leaders in (once majority leader) Sen. Scott Fitzgerald and recent Democratic minority leader Mark Miller. Fitzgerald himself faces a recall election May 8 against a grassroots newcomer, Lori Compas, who without money or Democratic Party support so won over his district as to produce an unchallengeable

Related stories: The mining debacle and the horrors of the legislative session, Page 8. The hijacking of MATC, Page 10.

number of recall petitions. Her newness, and his ineffective tenure as a Walker shadow, have clearly made him vulnerable - especially in a contest when money, which the Walker side has, is not making much of a dent in public passion.

The redistricting lawsuit throws an interesting wrinkle into the senate tie, now (March 22) that the three judge federal panel has ruled that the GOP majority tampered too heavily with the maps for two Latino districts in Milwaukee. The next step is for the legislature to redraw those two districts, and now that the Democrats and Republicans share control of one chamber they must cooperate and can expect strong Latino input.

If they can't, redistricting goes back to the judges to decide, though there are some

options.

All this happened as Walker's failed leadership whimpered to a conclusion on the Assembly side in a marathon session that coughed up an abortion bill and a power grab to wrest local control at MATC.



The GOP resignation made it unclear who will face highly regarded Democratic Rep. Donna Seidel May 8 or June 5 in the special run for Senate.

Official Notice

United Steelworkers Local 2-232, District 2, is notifying members of elections April 13 if a primary is needed and April 27 for the general election.

The election details:
Briggs & Stratton (124th St.) -- vote in the cafeteria - NE Entrance, Near Column H39 - NW Entrance, Near Column CC40, from 5 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. and from 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Briggs & Stratton (Falls) - Break Area - 6 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Strattec Security - Cafeteria - 5-7 a.m. and 1:30-3:30 p.m.
Union Office, 633 S.

Hawley Rd., Suite 116 - 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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-- Ralph Schwieger, Financial Secretary Treasurer

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Maddow event avoids mishap with Milwaukee unions

She picked a Wisconsin recall ad as her favorite commercial of last year. She joined lead-in host of "The Ed Show" in inviting defenders of state public bargaining on her MSNBC news show.

She's provided amusing, punchy, intelligent essays on issues close to progressive political concerns, from those weird right-wing social bills to those misleading and laughable "Politifacts" in the local paper.

Rachel Maddow's insightful political analysis has made her a favorite cable news host in Milwaukee and among union members, who will be highly interested that she is appearing in a solo talkback give-and-take appearance here Saturday, April 21 - a \$32 event including an autographed copy of her new book "Drift," which examines US military adventurism.

But Maddow had to duck a skirmish of her own with local unions though they pretty openly adore her progressive credentials and candor. In fact, they fair dreaded having to get into a running battle.

But the sponsors of her appearance, Crown Publishers, inadvertently caused that by moving her show from a union friendly venue to Downtown's Riverside Theater, which normally operates non-union and



MSNBC's Rachel Maddow and MALC CFO Sheila Cochran were both honored in Milwaukee three years ago at ACLU festivities at the Intercontinental Hotel. Maddow returns April 21 to a show at the Riverside Theater that almost didn't have union representation.

has been the site of union picketing in the past when it brought in non-union tours.

This could have been a double disaster because support of working class principles has been key to Maddow's appeal and is a big factor whenever she visits a state that has caused so much coverage of issues near and dear to her. Clearly, while Maddow is

promoting her new book, her timing is hotly political. She and fellow MSNBC host Ed Schultz have been busy all year covering the "uprising" against Gov. Walker's emasculating of collective bargaining, and she will appear here just when recall elections will likely be at the forefront of news coverage, with first ballots set for May 8 and likelihood that by the time of her

appearance it will be clear what Democrats are moving forward -- and giving media interviews about taking Walker on.

But when her staff was informed of the dilemma, with some quiet pleading from local unions and the Labor Press, Maddow stepped up. The Riverside is operated by the same team that runs the unionized Pabst Theater, so if an artist requests, the Riverside can add union workers to help run the show. Such a request has been made in Maddow's case and union stagehands will be on hand to augment the Riverside's standing operation.

There are other interesting sides to the story. In fact, that Saturday morning and afternoon in a major forum nearby, the state's Labor History Society will be conducting a major retrospective on Wisconsin's labor heritage.

Wisconsin's troubles and important issues of social justice represent the sort of intellectual commitment and candor Maddow's show has become famous for. But it is also true that her popularity and controversy have led naturally to walls of protection being erected around her, which explains why Milwaukee unions first had trouble explaining the problem to her people.

The unions were nice enough not to mention a similar problem several years ago when the ACLU honored her in Milwaukee with a special award at the Intercontinental Hotel. That is the one downtown Marcus owned hotel that does not have union workers, though it is in a complex attached to the union-supported Milwaukee Rep and Pabst Theater.

But locals who had picketed the hotel in years past did not make an issue because neither the ACLU nor Maddow knew, though another ACLU honoree getting an award that night did and also kept quiet -- Sheila Cochran, leader of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council. All just avoided bringing up the issue, in concern not to embarrass Maddow on a big night.

The entertainment unions here, known collectively as MASH, weren't ready to keep silent again. They were anxious that Maddow help resolve the Riverside problem. (On other occasions, the stagehands, union musicians and Actors Equity had joined in picketing Riverside tours.) Of course, these unions still are wondering whether the same booking problem by Maddow's publisher exists in other cities where she is scheduled to appear.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

Green Bay unions honored by Community Services

On Thursday, March 15, at its annual conference, the AFL-CIO of Wisconsin Community Services committee recognized local unions for their outstanding contribution to the community through their work with Rebuilding Together of Greater Green Bay.

The Plumbers and Steamfitters United Association Local 400, Operating Engineers Local 310 at Wisconsin Public Service, Carpenters Local 1146, and IBEW Local 158 were recognized for their contribution of professional expertise, tireless service and dedication to the home repairs project.

Rebuilding Together of Greater Green Bay is an organization of ordinary volunteers and trade professionals who make homes safe for low income elderly, handicapped, and veterans. Every year a group of sponsors make needed repairs to roughly 12 to 15 homes in the area. In addition to performing small repairs and complete remodels, last year the group built a home from the ground up for a disabled veteran in Keshena.

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Politics may have brought people to Oscar's Pub, but it was St. Patrick's Day and two Wisconsin teams in simultaneous NCAA games on TV that took prominence and kept them there. Both Marquette and UW-Madison won.

Whole world IS watching Wisconsin



750 cheering residents realized that as the Reclaim Wisconsin tour hit Serb Hall, evoking fist-pumping for speakers like Michael Whaites (center), a blond nurses' organizer all the way from South Wales to mark the one year anniversary of the "Uprising." But first came retired Sheboygan music teacher Frank Koczan (right above and shown singing below) opening the rally with an almost vulgar sing-along - "We've got Walker by the B-A-L-L-ot box!" From Canada, Europe and more, media specialists flooded into Wisconsin to capture the events and speed images around the world. Teresa Marshall (below right), the communications coordinator for PSI (the powerful Public Services International), took the crowd on a video tour of world protesters wielding banners saluting Wisconsin. Labor leader Larry Brown, shown below left sitting between state AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Stephanie Bloomingdale and another key speaker, AFT nurses' leader Candice Owley, explained to laughter that "Canadians are unarmed Americans with health care" - but then he brought the roof down with a ruthless penetrating dissection of Walker's right-winging.



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Speaker Sheila Cochran joked that she wouldn't follow typical form by opening with a teacher - and then did. But it was retired teacher Frank Koczan sharing political lyrics, which broke up a crowd including AFSCME Madison leader Marty Beil (below).



Walker shanghai mortgage foreclosure funds

Alone among states, he and Van Hollen use bank money intended for mortgage relief

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
Labor Press Editor

It was an astonishingly good deal, reminiscent of the tobacco settlement negotiated way back in the 1990s by then Atty. Gen. Jim Doyle, but frittered away by a Republican governor named Scott, in that case McCallum.

This new settlement with big business -- announced in February and finalized in court in March -- contained less billions, but it was still remarkably big and innovative. It took months of negotiations by the US justice department and state attorneys general, 49 in all participating though many including Wisconsin's were tagalongs. The heavy lifting was done by New York State, Iowa and others out east.

But even before the final deal was announced there was plotting underway by yet another Wisconsin governor named Scott, this time Walker.

Under the deal, the nation's top banks agreed to provide \$26 billion of their own money super-

vised by outside regulators to help address the mortgage foreclosure crisis their own behavior had caused. About 750,000 foreclosed homeowners are expected to qualify and there is \$17 billion to apply to loan modification programs and other forms of consumer relief. Principal banks in the deal are Bank of America, Citigroup, Ally Financial (formerly GMAC) and Chase.

It began with a coordinated lawsuit against the banks by state attorneys general. The US justice department joined as did other states including Wisconsin under GOP Atty. Gen. J. B. Van Hollen. All demanded action by financial institutions for the damage done by freewheeling and unstrung mortgage contracts, credit default swaps and other maneuvers that drove the nation's homes underwater. Consumers were left with bloated debt and mortgages worth more than homes.

Now the nation is recovering and the banks are doing well. But they face a new awareness and a new administration, so being contrite is not enough. Under government pressure the top banks agreed in this settlement to supervised remorse..

The \$26 billion settlement

creates an outside monitor to assure the relief gets to financially injured clients -- and there was no barrier in the deal to further legal action, according to government spokesmen who took this reporter inside the deal.

But recognizing how varied state financial programs were, \$5 billion in the deal was reserved to participating state governments (including about \$750,000 to the federal government). (A dispute between Florida and California about which state should get more money caused Florida to withdraw.)

Wisconsin's share is about \$140 million, but only about \$36 million of that was available to the state itself, the rest going directly from the bank to victims with an outside monitor.

Unfortunately for foreclosure victims, the arrangement landed just as Walker got some bad news, undoing his reputation of balancing the state budget. Of course, a balanced budget is required under the law, but it sure makes great headlines if you don't look too deeply at the projections that get you there -- balancing is a snap when you just

rip \$1.6 billion out of education aid over two years.

In 2012, threatened with a strong recall movement, he was assuring the public that any state deficit was wiped away by his actions - and then learned it was not.

All state budgets and deficits are projections, but his guesses left a hole, \$140 million out of whack. Did you notice that \$140 million is also Wisconsin's share of the mortgage deal with the banks? But unlike that tobacco settlement, there were controls to keep most of that money out of state government hands. Only about \$36 million of that \$140 million was under Walker and Van Hollen's control.

You can probably guess the temptation that hit them looking at this loophole. The day the settlement was announced they in effect hijacked nearly 80% of what they could -- "applying" \$26 million of the \$36 million mortgage foreclosure funds to the state deficit he had previously told the public didn't exist.

State attorneys general meeting in D.C. recently would not

directly criticize Van Hollen (though some may have done so privately), but agreed all this money from the banks was supposed to go to help the consumer crisis while giving individual states flexibility. But only one other state, Missouri, is using its share for other purposes -- to mitigate cuts to higher education.

Outraged legislators here tried to introduce a bill to commit all the Wisconsin's share to mortgage foreclosure relief. Similar insistence has been introduced at the Milwaukee Common Council. Mayor Tom Barrett went on national TV to complain, pointing out how many thousands of Milwaukee houses are facing foreclosure and could have benefited.

In the past, when Walker has tried to bend the intentions of programs created with other governments, state and federal, he backed off when he couldn't get a waiver. In this case, it will take political pressure, and maybe just plain mocking to make the venal duo relent. But as of this writing they continue to defend their finagling.

Moderates swing to Obama in poll

Millions of working class voters with moderate and even some with conservative views may well be poised to vote for the reelection of Obama, according to a poll of 2,076 national voters discussed in Orlando by the AFL-CIO at its executive meetings.

The poll last January demonstrated that 54% of Working America's 3 million members favor the president for reelection. The figures are important because Working America, an AFL-CIO affiliate for non-union members, seeks to bring moderate and even conservative voters closer to the labor movement and its positions on issues.

Of the 2,076 sample, 280 were young members under age 35, half were over 50 and half under, while 80% were white. Karen Nussbaum, Working America president, said the results confirmed "that Republican overreach in their attacks on unions and in their extremist positions overall could well be hurting them. It is going to be our job to make sure more and more people move in the direction our members are moving in."

Among other findings: The highest priority was job creation, with 34.6% naming it as the top issue. Only 4.6% identify taxes as the No. 1 issue.

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Usually glib Walker sounds ready to split

No question - "cable news" lives on the "gotcha" quote. That's the sound-bite when a politician speaking off the cuff embarrasses himself by misspeaking or inadvertently revealing his hidden state of mind. The public and opposition can seize it, loop it and make too much of it -- from a campus hug to a dog in a crate

on a car roof, and right down the line.

But sometimes the remark exposes an ingrained mind-set or demeaning self-analysis and indifference that speak volumes.

The usually glib and politically savvy Scott Walker stepped into that big-time in a forum speech March 12 to conservative backers that was not only catnip

to his opponents but suggested that he himself knew the handwriting was on the wall in a recall election now scheduled for June 5. Despite raising unlimited money under a quirk in campaign laws, the remarks inadvertently revealed how he was looking around the corner at impending defeat - and why he didn't really care.

Being governor was "not that important" to him, he told the conservative group. Unimpressed by what many would regard as quite an outlay by the taxpayers, he dismissed his \$143,423 taxpayer-funded salary as small change and reported that his wife "would love for him to go back to the private sector and make some real money."

Aside from providing fodder for opposition media ads, Walker's comments coincided with a devastating chart of how little time is spent on taxpayer business, such as actually working with the legislature on bills versus personal time devoted to massive fund raising for political protection. In fact in one dash to Palm Beach, he picked up more than \$200,000. -- D.P.N.

Bowling

Milwaukee Area Labor Council Mixed Seniors

FEBRUARY 2012 RESULTS

TEAM	WINS	LOSSES
8 BALLS	101	74
ONE BOARD OVER	89	86
PIN PALS	87	88
SLAMMERS	87	88
GUTTER RATS	85	90
CRAZY 8'S	76	99
<u>IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 500</u>		
DAN LAACK		686
DON WIEDMANN		558
DEL GROSS		536
BOB WAGNER		527
GREG MARTIN		523
STEVE LINK		504
DAN KNIPPEL		502
WALLY GEISE		502

IND. HIGH GAME OVER 175

DAN LAACK	256
STEVE LINK	212
BOB WAGNER	212
DEL GROSS	200
GREG MARTIN	194
DON WIEDMANN	193
WALLY GEISE	192
DAN KNIPPEL	180

IND. HIGH SERIES OVER 400

EILEEN WESTERFIELD	602
JOYCE KNIPPEL	490
RAE MATOWSKI	478
PHYLLIS NAVARRETE	453

IND. HIGH GAME OVER 170

EILEEN WESTERFIELD	223
JOYCE KNIPPEL	179
PHYLLIS NAVARRETE	178
RAE MATOWSKI	175

Cooper pact suggests impact of lockout rallies

The national attention to the corporate lockout tactic - highlighted in a story last month - seems to have played a role in embarrassing one company to drop the ploy.

By a 627-321 vote, the Steelworkers at Cooper Tire's Findlay, Ohio, plant in late February ratified a new 5-year contract, effective March 1. The pact also ended Cooper's lockout of the 1,051 workers, which has lasted since Thanksgiving.

But all is not sweet love between management and union, PAI news service reports. Clearly publicity surrounding the lockout of workers embarrassed the company as Cooper members joined locked out Crystal Sugar workers to stage a six-day 1,000 mile march through six states including Wisconsin, calling attention to the tactic.

All that may have changed Cooper to propose a better deal, but the company is far from the once friendly relations with USW Local 207L, local President Rodney Nelson said. He points out that the USW's unfair labor practices complaints to the National Labor Relations Board were not dropped despite the five year deal.

In a letter to his members, Nelson called the 5-year pact "the very best we could do without risking further financial harm to our families, community, and our customers. We are proud to have remained united and delivered a fair contract, despite Cooper's best attempts to divide us."

"You should know that during bargaining the parties did not settle our board charges and our charges will continue to be processed by the NLRB. It remains our position that the lockout was unlawful because of multiple unfair labor practices committed by the company and that pursuant to the required NLRB remedy for an unlawful lockout the company must make the locked-out workers whole for all lost wages and benefits."

Cooper doesn't do that in the new deal. Despite the union's good-faith offer to stay at work while bargaining continued, the company imported so-called "replacement workers," or what the USW characterizes as "scabs." The new contract summary does not mention the fate of the scabs. But it does support priority for present Cooper worker relatives who technically qualify for future jobs.

USW District Director Dave McCall feels the lockout lowered Cooper's standing. The national attention included the joint solidarity march from Fargo, N.D., to Ohio also featuring the Bakery Workers locked out by American Crystal Sugar since August.

The Cooper contract included lump-sum raises of \$800 yearly for the first three years, starting March 1, for workers hired before Jan. 1, 2009, and \$1,200 yearly for two years for workers hired afterwards. In 2015-16, the senior workers get raises tied to increases in the Consumer Price Index. The newer workers get raises of 10 cents hourly in 2014, 15 cents in 2015 and 20 cents in 2016. There's also a "graduated wage program" for new hires.

The more-veteran workers stay in Cooper's old defined benefit pension plan.

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Calendar

Visit www.milwaukeeelabor.org for updated events

Tuesday, April 3

General Election

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

Wednesday, April 4

Monthly Delegate Meeting

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

Saturday, April 21

Labor History Conference

It's Not Over! Reclaiming Our Heritage

9 a.m.-3 p.m. with lunch

Postal Workers Hall, 417 N. 3rd St.

See full story Page 7

Wednesday, April 25

Executive Council Meeting

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

Wednesday, May 2

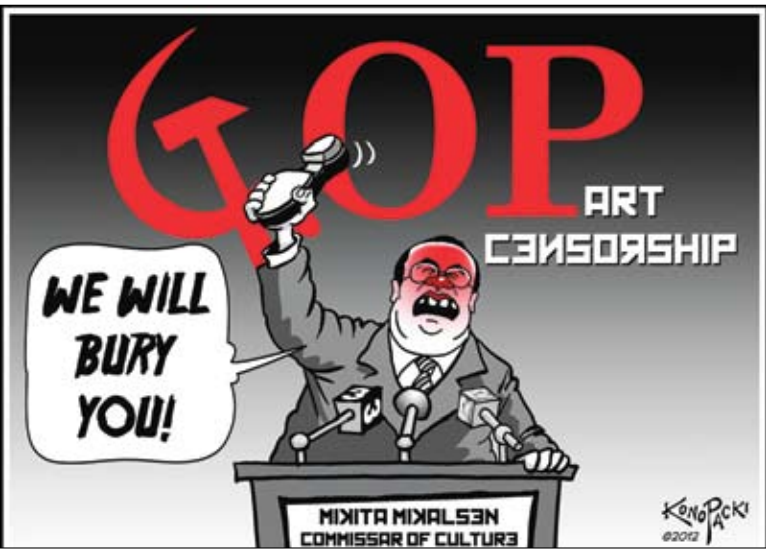
Monthly Delegate Meeting

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

Heritage participants keep making labor history



They know Wisconsin's labor history, but they are also making it. State AFL-CIO President Phil Neuenfeldt, a forum panelist, is also key planner and organizer for the Recall Walker movement and spoke to 750 cheering Reclaim Wisconsin enthusiasts March 7 as the statewide tour arrived at Serb Hall.



Some managers really listen don't they?

You've heard about management "open door" policies, but Northwest Labor Press suggests this one is going too far. Greg Godfrey is the plant manager at the non-union Dyno Nobel chemical factory in Deer Island, Oregon (north of St. Helens). According to National Labor Relations Board charges filed by the Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers (AWPPW), Godfrey drove to a hotel Feb. 9 where the union was meeting with employees and looked in to hear and see who was attending.

After the union organizer confronted him, he left, but he later returned, parked nearby and spied on employees, the union alleges. AWPPW says he went on to interrogate employees, verbally abuse union supporters, and indicate that those who supported the union were disloyal, even telling them if they didn't like the way they were being treated, they could leave and move to Australia. (The company there owns the plant). Despite the intimidation, AWPPW has requested a union election for the 24 workers at the plant.

The 31st annual conference of the Wisconsin Labor History Society, featuring dozens of noted participants in recent labor battles, will look at how the state is regaining its progressive traditions.

Called "It's Not Over: Reclaiming Wisconsin's Labor Heritage," the 2012 conference will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, April 21, at the Postal Workers Union Hall, 417 N. 3rd St., Milwaukee.

After looking back to the early 1900s and the early struggles of Wisconsin workers to organize, the conference will examine the more recent events involving the huge rallies in Madison and elsewhere in the state in the wake of stripping public employees of collective bargaining rights.

The 9 a.m. welcome will be provided by Steve Cusperry, president of the Wisconsin Labor History Society, Paul McKenna, president of the American Postal Workers Milwaukee, and Sheila Cochran, CFO of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council.

Shel Stromquist, professor of history from the University of Iowa, will be keynote speaker. Brad Lichtenstein, a film producer, will discuss and show portions of his forthcoming documentary on the

LEFT: Presenter cartoonist Mike Konopacki doesn't just explore labor history, he's now making it and getting under the skin of Republican lawmakers in the process. Offended at their jackboots backstage role in halting a valid academic celebration of a year's protest art, he organized the independent continuation of it. Then he became the rare parodist to be charged with a crime for using a legislator's letterhead in a mock press release. Offended again at the lack of a sense of humor, the feisty Konopacki produced more scathing cartoons and may use an 1897 law in his defense. It was aimed at another group that tried to suppress free speech and is appropriately named the "Ku Klux Klan law."

story behind the closing of the General Motors plant in Janesville, the oldest GM plant.

Stephen Meyer, emeritus professor of history at UWM, will discuss worker advocacy tactics from the early 1900s to the 1930s in a panel entitled: "Fighting Back in an Antiunion Era."

After lunch and a 1 p.m. presentation of high school awards winners and Zeidler historians, there is "Fighting Back in Recent Times," a panel by Phil Neuenfeldt, president of the State AFL-CIO; State Sen. Chris Larson (D-Milwaukee), one of the Wisconsin 14; Charity Schmidt, a leader of the Madison rallies; Khalil Coleman of the Milwaukee Occupy movement, and Lane Hall of the Overpass Lighthouse Brigade.

Madison labor cartoonist Mike Konopacki will show how cartoons and similar art works can motivate worker struggles while Peter Rickman, an organizer for We Are Milwaukee, will discuss such modern tactics as social media in campaigns.

The timing is propitious since Recall Walker and recalls of four state senators occur in May and June. The conference also takes place the afternoon of commentator Rachel Maddow's evening appearance at the nearby Downtown Riverside Theater and a week before the MALC and the AFL-CIO Workers Memorial Day celebration April 28 at nearby Zeidler Union Square Park.

The Wisconsin Labor History Society, founded in 1981, is affiliated with the Wisconsin Historical Society and supported by labor unions, historians and individuals. Its goal is to encourage the preservation of worker and union history and to promote greater knowledge of labor history among students at all levels and the general public.

For instant registration and online payment of \$30 or to download a brochure, visit wlhsconference12-esearch.eventbrite.com

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Mining debacle typifies Walker's legislative fiasco

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
Labor Press Editor

It was no mere partisan rhetoric when Democrat Chris Larson summed up the senate turmoil that limped to a conclusion March 15: "This botched Republican-run session will go down in state history books as the most divisive and dishonest legislative session ever."

The minority side had ample cause to be unhappy at the lack of listening and compromise, but Larson's comment was proving flat factual. Primary evidence was the defeat despite arm-twisting of Gov. Walker's signature legislation. It was doomed by his arrogant unwillingness to negotiate for an open pit iron ore mining bill, though he had clear warnings from within his own party. And elsewhere, including the blue-collar members of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation who hunt and camp.

Still, you can start a fight in any union gathering over the mining project. The ore is currently valuable (who knows if the market will hold?) and the jobs mining would create are desperately needed.

Construction unions have lingered for years with 30% unemployment of skilled workers.

The desire was clear in both parties, to the point that even devotees of the environment and lovers of the pristine land in Ashland and Iron counties near Lake Superior were willing to accept the gouging, deep cuts and frankly ugly stripping evident in similar "modernized" operations in Michigan and Minnesota. And some unions

thought they had a good deal locked in when Gogebic Taconite committed to 95% union jobs in construction of the 22,000 acre strip mine.

Closer examination by other unions and community organizers saw something else that made them not trust the deal no matter how much all wanted the jobs.

The Army Corps of Engineers wrote a warning letter last summer that you can't mine this way. The Bad River band of Ojibwe (Chippewa) gave Walker its objections months ago. But Walker and the company were committed to strong-arm tactics, glib promises and exaggerations. Talks about 4,000 jobs shrunk to a couple of hundred 18 month to two year construction jobs. His emphasis on speedy approval only temporarily disguised from the media that, even at his desired mad-dash pace, actual

Keystone PLA in effect

Washington, D.C. -- PAI-- The construction unions that signed a project labor agreement four years ago covering the Keystone XL pipeline say the PLA will stay in force even on the scaled-down project. The shorter pipe, from Cushing, Okla., to the Gulf Coast's oil refineries, would create an estimated 4,000 construction jobs.

The unions - the Laborers, Operating Engineers, Teamsters and Plumbers and Pipefitters - welcomed the Feb. 28 announcement by TransCanada, the pipeline's owner, that the Cushing segment would be built. A

work was more than a year away.

His concept of speed removed protection for purity of groundwater and lake water, exposing the real danger of seeping toxicity. Wetlands mitigation allowed under the bill could destroy the ecological core of the region. Walker and Gogebic insisted that contested case hearings, a way for land owners to air their concerns before land was taken by fiat, be held after the land was taken.

The last was one of the deal-breakers, but doubts were spreading all along the tortured way -- particularly the refusal to sit down in a room and talk out the issues.

Walker and the GOP majority rode roughshod over such concerns in the Assembly and tried to do the same in the Senate, but there that stubbornness against listening blocked advancement because one princi-

spokesman for the Operating Engineers confirmed that work had been bid out in segments "and six 'pods' of construction have already been bid from Oklahoma to Texas."

The Obama administration also welcomed TransCanada's statement. By building only in the US right now, TransCanada avoids State Department approval, overrode earlier this year due to environmental protests about the pipeline's impact on the aquifer and about sulfur-laden "dirty" oil it would transport from Alberta tar sands.

All sides are trying to correct the impression that the pipeline has been stopped, but it has been delayed outside US borders.

TransCanada also plans the Montana to Kansas segment but has to work out a solution for the middle segment, over an ecologically vulnerable Nebraska aquifer, which has brought concerns from Republican state leaders.



Public domain photo of a Minnesota open pit iron mine.

pled moderate in the GOP, Dale Schultz, joined Democrats in seeking a compromise and was rebuffed on clear issues of transparency and fair dealing.

A Walker ally, the senate majority leader Scott Fitzgerald who is also a target of recall May 8, thwarted compromise even within his own party.

The doubts of opponents were confirmed when the company abandoned the deal - picking up its marbles and walking out, as some legislators put it - after it became clear it couldn't force its own terms even in a bill that Walker had let the company write.

Mining could come back, many legislators now say in a bipartisan statement, if Walker bends or another of his uninformed hires, the obedient DNR secretary Cathy Stepp, change obstinate attitude. There are, after all, other mining companies out there and ways to change procedures and still protect larger concerns.

There are also other mining companies, according to the corporate community, that will actually work things through intelligently.

This mining debacle was the legislative session in a nutshell - bullying through stuff the GOP had the votes for and letting most of the rest go. Letting corporate insiders write their own ticket, squashing even Republicans who

think the tactics ugly and the rewards too slight, blaming the opposition when extreme views failed.

Lost in the interminable shuffle is that this was a "special session" supposed to be focused on jobs. Perhaps that explains why Walker was so desperate for even a bad mining bill and was willing to make a deal on paper with unions who, after they get over their anger, are learning not to trust him again.

Because the sad truth of Walker's administrative follies and deception lies in both national and state numbers. While neighboring states have posted significant job gains. Wisconsin under his thumb has fallen far behind - dead last in private sector job growth among all the state.

A new nationwide report released by the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics shows Wisconsin lost more private sector jobs than any other state over the past year, no matter how the GOP juggles the numbers. In fact, Wisconsin is one of only six states to lose jobs in the past year, and "our job losses are more than three times higher than the next state on that unfortunate list," noted Larson.

Among the bills that failed to advance were grants to technical colleges for training in advanced manufacturing; grants to help local businesses expand and diversify plus other expansions of workforce advancement training, a program to link more qualified workers to businesses through Walker's own questionable quasi-public Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, increasing tax credits to dairies for expansion and on and on.

Ironically these included ideas that stemmed from Republicans and had bipartisan support. But the GOP was so busy picking its own corporate winners and proselytizing its own extreme social issues that the average Wisconsinite was, like the mining promise, left in the dust.

Daily and in archives, the best look at mining politics can be found at Jim Rowen's *thepoliticalenvironment.blogspot.com*.

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How false equivalency dominates news coverage

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
Labor Press Editor

False equivalency is running amuck on the nation's news pages. This is the manufactured effort to appear balanced. Media does this by always pointing to both sides no matter the reality. The writing game -- I know it well -- is to tsk-tsk over the constant over-reach, sneak attacks and demeaning personal smears emanating from the right wing but then always say the left wing has sometimes said or done terrible things and would obviously descend to the same low-blow punches if they had the chance.

More and more, that is a way to excuse the villainy, to ignore the deception and hope the public doesn't weigh the misbehavior correctly.

Of course Democrats seek political advantage. That's almost the definition of a political party. The left has people who sometimes go too far and say and do mean things and should be slapped down. But let's not confuse zealots with the coordinated power madness being exercised by the right, combined with the cowardice of not immediately shooting down their own idiots (which the Democrats, to their credit, more frequently do - check the record on how Democratic women jumped to criticize the personal attacks on Michelle Bachman and Sarah Palin's family).

But for the Republicans to pretend that liberals routinely behave as extremely as this new breed of Republican is simply not true. It's even wrong that they have been equally blatant and power mad when they had the control and chance.

That is the false equivalency. Right now it is rampant - and frankly, shame on the journalists so engaged under the thumb of competitive pressure, careless research or conservative ownership. It shouldn't matter whether you lean left or right - good factual analysis exposes something quite different.

An epidemic of journalistic false equivalence exists on the national level as well in the state. Consider as one case the Associated Press coverage of the surprise retirement of respected Olympia Snowe from the US Senate. A shoo-in for re-election in Maine, a veteran moderate in the GOP who had once earned applause from both sides, she also angered Democrats recently when she atypically hung them out to dry on health care and consumer protection.

She made it crystal clear in a little reported retirement statement that it was gridlock and divisiveness that led her to leave, but she was not talking about the Democrats:

"Our leaders must under-

stand that there is not only strength in compromise, courage in conciliation and honor in consensus-building - but also a political reward for following these tenets. . . I do not believe that, in the near term, the Senate can correct itself from within. It is by nature a political entity and, therefore, there must be a benefit to working across the aisle."

Snowe is raised in the tradition of political decorum, so she couched her dismay in nonspecific accusations, but even casual students of Senate politics knew who she was talking about and how she had been isolated in every attempt to work across the aisle, leaving her as the lone Republican voice in the defeat of the Blunt amendment, which normally many Republicans, including Blunt himself, would have opposed.

It was obvious to all, yet even the AP in this national story couldn't resist false equivalency, pontificating that she left because "Democrats drifted further left and Republicans shifted right, protecting their flanks and widening the gulf in Washington."

Except you can't find Democrats drifting left - they actually have been moving to the right while the GOP has forced Snowe to sheer hard right, away from the compromise range.

My description is hardly a myth. It is substantiated by recent academic analysis, even from the University of Georgia, hardly a hotbed of leftist policy. Examining presidential and congressional voting 1879-2012 the academics reveal a disturbing set of historic graphs at voteview.com/blog. These indicate how for the last 60 years, from LBJ to Carter to Clinton to Obama, the Democrats have hardly budged in policy direction in the White House or Congress.

On the whole they actually moved slightly to the right not the left, while the Republicans have not lazily drifted more to the right - they have veered so sharply to almost jump off the top of the graph. In doing so, the analysis shows, they have forced moderates in both parties out of their comfort zone if they want to get anything done.

No wonder Snowe left and the GOP, once riddled with moderates, has no room for them.

(Rachel Maddow is a liberal cable host, but she played the facts right down the middle in a penetrating analysis of these trends March 1. It is still available at www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26315908/ns/msnbc_tv-rachel_maddow_show/#46581797.)

Now return to Wisconsin and redistricting. A panel of three federal judges dominated by Republican appointees had yet to finalize rulings as we went to press

Comment

whether the GOP majority obeyed election laws in redistributing voting boundaries based on the 2010 US census. Judges seek to defer to the legislature as the elected people's voice, meaning that under legal standards, the GOP would have to blatantly warp and/or dissemble in concocting these boundaries, moving beyond mere political advantage to guarantee dominance and unfair control even in once competitive districts.

The citizen challengers say that's what they did.

The judges -- at least as we went to press -- are proving more cautious, even after determining that the Republicans overreached by claiming attorney-client privilege when they hired lawyers and told them how to redraw the boundaries and then refusing to share documents with the plaintiffs. Three times the judges were rebuffed by the GOP until the documents were produced and did reveal political collusion.

And that led to judicial language so blunt in attacking the "shameful" GOP behavior that it shocked the normally staid legal community. Judges don't normally talk like this:

"We have had enough of the charade and mischaracterization . . . the facts are the facts. What has occurred here is beyond the pale in terms of lack of transparency, secrecy, and at the end of the day, as the court has commented earlier, it may not have anything to do with the price of tea in China, but appearances are everything, and Wisconsin has prided itself for one generation after another on openness and fairness and doing the right thing."

Yet despite their clear anger the judges still offered the GOP majority more than a bone - a way out through compromise to avoid a trial. Their reward was seeing how the GOP legislature is borrowing a page from Gov. Walker -- double down rather than negotiate.

The same lawyers that got the GOP in trouble claimed there was a 1954 state Supreme Court decision that prevented them from fixing errors, quite an interpretation. In fact, the court rejected that argument yet the GOP still declined to bend. (The real strategy is that even if the GOP loses they think the conservative US Supreme Court will rescue its own, a dangerous view from lawyers that have already misled the GOP - even right-wing justices don't like to be played for fools).

Note how only the GOP was under attack and in a February 26 editorial the Journal Sentinel properly



How media played Maine US Sen. Olympia Snowe's decision.

An epidemic of journalistic false equivalence exists on the national level as well the state.

excoriated them. Yet the JS still couldn't resist engaging in that false equivalency:

"For all the sanctimonious whining about the way the Republicans have operated, Democrats would have done everything in their power to ensure their success at the ballot box - just like the GOP did."

Really? Where except political fear of what conservative readers would say did that come from?

Actually, as former veteran Journal reporter James Rowen noted in his thepoliticalenvironment.blogspot.com, this is flat not true. Even in the rare cases when in control of redistricting, the state Democrats never twisted like this, nor did they make legislators sign confidentially oaths and swear not to tell the public the truth about the shenanigans, as the GOP did this time.

There are constant other examples of this false equivalency, from Mitt Romney's spokesman stretching to defend his overstatements but saying his side's "extreme rhetoric" should only be toned down when the media eliminated "intolerant voices on the left," which apparently included every commentator who criticized such Romney vows as getting rid of Planned Parenthood.

One of the most obvious false equivalencies was built around the GOP behavior involving Rush Limbaugh's obscene attack on a Georgetown coed, with the right wing claiming that it was a setup by the left that made him call her a slut on the air. But this is an entire separate essay since the incident badly warped the national discussion of contraceptive coverage while revealing how Limbaugh did not understand the issue, birth control or even basic biology.

All these examples are more than stories of the nation's extreme partisanship. They are symptoms of the media knee-jerk justifying or excusing our political divide with feints to the fake middle, with such facile dismiss-

sives as "both sides are equally guilty" or "the other side would do it if they could" or "politics were even uglier in the 19th century" or, even worse, "dirty tricks and shady dealings are business as usual in American politics."

How demeaning. We are supposed to have matured from the nasty 18th and 19th centuries, unless you really want to go back to lynching and a 60% infant mortality rate. We are supposed to get better than our heritage, not hide behind lame yellow journalism excuses that Americans have always done this.

The hidden danger of the false equivalency is cynicism that freezes us. It suggests that political service can never be honorable - as opposed to a presumption that it should always be honorable and failures should be constantly exposed and accurately condemned, particularly by journalists.

This is not to say Democrats are pure and Republicans are the fallen angels (though I am beginning to think this new breed bears remote relationship to the traditional Republican Party).

It is to criticize how often in the current context, it is transparent that one side is heavily guilty and lacking in comity.

The other side? It is often stunned, paralyzed or too willing to drift to the right in the hope of finding that old-fashioned principled American compromise.

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GOP's power grab at MATC guts local control

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
Labor Press Editor

Local control -- that people who pay for and use public services have major voice in how those services are dispensed -- was long an applaudable tenet of the old Republican Party.

A sadder recent tenet is hatred of unions, focused on that chamber of commerce canard that seeking better benefits is anti-business, that standing up for workers holds down rewards at the top. Amazingly the right wing has gotten away with labeling the unions as the greedy bastards because some do fight the wealthy's influence.

So what happens when the Republicans put those two ideological trouser legs in conflict? Of course! "Punish unions" trumps the principle of local control. Though in this case it took a marathon final session in the Assembly March 16 to beat the opponents into submission, including some in the GOP, and pass Senate Bill 275 for the governor's signature.

This is the takeover by corporate toadies of the successful Milwaukee Area Technical College by controlling the diverse representation of its board through an appointment overseer of four elected politicians, 50% from Ozaukee and Washington counties. The Democrats in the Assembly staged a major stall but succumbed after a 22 hour session and a side deal that delayed the takeover and preserved ownership of the TV stations.

Why so crass a takeover and loss of local control now?

Why so obvious a spur to injured citizens to take back the legislature in November elections? You have to look no shallower than Glenn Grothman.

Ozaukee and Washington counties are influenced and controlled by the Republican elected leaders and business classes - in other words, Grothman. They send MATC only 6% of its students yet want half the control - and could gain more if they hook the Milwaukee county exec and the next chair of that board.

Grothman stood watch over these strong-arm negotiations, providing pizza to rally balking Republicans. He still found time to introduce a Senate bill making single parents a criminal factor in determining child abuse (no kidding!).

So now you can call *him* a single parent -- of criminal democratic abuse by authoring and pushing the MATC bill.

Grothman would object because most single parents he detests are from what Grothman would call the lesser sex. But the comparison still holds for this Limbaugh of the state legislature who regards himself as an education guru and has long sought to wrap his sticky fingers around MATC, the technical college that most represents the progressive community and whose teachers have played a dynamic role in political opposition to Republican over-reach.

Grothman serves as frequent GOP spokesman and nasty whip because he can keep his cool on camera despite deserved insults. He made his bones as bedpan carrier for Scott Walker's policies, serving as the leading voice



Crowds erupted in protest Feb. 29 on news of MATC usurpation.

for shutting down the Capitol, slashing \$1.6 billion in education funding and cutting corporate taxes to win awards from conservative business groups.

Grothman pontificates like a know-it-all, until you check out YouTube videos of his Tea Party rants about society and women. He openly hates social progress and longs for a return to the mythic 1950s. He opposes 4 year old kindergarten, SAGE, union teachers --- but oh he loves women . . . in their place. He believes they are taking jobs from men (just the guy to have a larger voice in tech college policy) and shouldn't earn like men because they leave to do disgusting things like having children.

Females forced to testify before him in Senate hearings describe feeling groped as he always calls them "gals" or "those gals" and seems dismissive of whatever they have to say. Women legislators admit they have difficulty staying civil. While his view of single parents has infuriated the nation, his role in the attack on MATC has not been as publicized.

In sad economic times and though focused on working class trades education from nurses to culinary chefs, MATC maintains a remarkably high graduation and employment rate - and it draws 84% of its money and 90% of its students from Milwaukee County!

"Milwaukee taxpayers should be outraged at this blatant power grab," noted Milwaukee Supervisor Gerry Broderick. But do Madison politicians understand that destroying local control is as destructive to economic growth as shipping jobs to Asia? Apparently not.

Under Grothman's ministrations, aided by Rep. Mark

Honadel, the bill moved rapidly without public hearing accompanied by press releases that lie about the reasons for the takeover and disguise MATC's acclaimed skills program, manufacturing licensing certification and other nationally recognized innovations, inflating the complaints from a few that it was not responsive enough.

Yes, the current formula for electing a nine member MATC board is complicated, involving community input and more than 20 area school board directors who must divide representation among employers, employees and community.

Under another name such complexities are called democracy.

It's messy to explain to the public -- and apparently the mainstream press -- but board member Fred Royal points out what's not complicated: Results. "For every \$1 invested in MATC, we return \$6 to the local economy," he noted, emphasizing how hundreds of business leaders already participate

MATC has diverse local input from all levels, an A11 bond rating higher than the state's downgraded one, a record of putting student needs first and keeping grads in the community, a newly active president and a faculty world-renowned, well paid and unionized - aha! So that's the rub!

Community outrage led to a mass rally featuring local leaders and a largely mystified faculty from Local 212, AFT, who had given up raises over two years just to help the college's finances. The teachers defend their pay because of prestige, experience and results. (Aha again! How dare they be proud

of what they do?)

The stated conservative concern is the board's makeup is too supportive of the unionized teachers -- another aha! -- and not responsive enough to the demands of the business community.

Translation: The leadership isn't working hard enough to beat the faculty down in wages and prepare graduates to more obediently accept whatever a company gives them. There's just not enough deference at MATC to the big bosses.

That push seemed to be led by the political arm of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Association of Commerce, but even these folks had to duck away under media questioning about the active manufacturing rep on the MATC board, which also has a rep from Manpower and several skilled workers with manufacturing backgrounds. It turns out on that some of the companies complaining also had ducked pleas from the MMAC to apply for the board over the years or in a few cases failed to win election, which raises the issue of sour grapes.

MATC's welding program has been attacked, but it is actually state of the art and has open slots because of how corporations have dumped experienced welders at every sign of economic downturn (hardly an incentive for young people to choose the career). Investigating the complaints also revealed that some disgruntled companies paid less than their competition.

So it could be that some of the complaining companies are actually demanding that MATC provide a huge pool of welders to choose from for their own transient special machinery in order to keep wages down and selectivity high.

If only more companies put financial support and active cooperation behind the MATC's innovative programs rather than seeking to create their own plantation! But what too many want is genuflection.

It's sort of like expecting Marquette University to train lawyers not just to pass the bar but litigate without pay the unique credit default swap your company got sucked into.

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Backroom politics stall Milwaukee jobs projects

By **Dominique Paul Noth**
Labor Press Editor

Political cowardice when it comes to creating jobs was the blinding central issue in March for Milwaukee unions, even amid the turmoil and enthusiasm to recall Walker.

This was not just about the obvious Wisconsin policies that prevented being part of the national job recovery.

In Milwaukee, anger and unhappiness were particularly aimed at so-called allies who were stalling action to generate job growth.

A final effort was attempted at City Hall March 20 as about 70 protesters with signs greeted the Common Council at its last pre-election meeting -- silent witnesses to the failure to act.

They were ignored, except for an alert to police to be ready with plastic handcuffs. Which were unnecessary. These were ministers and community leaders the aldermen had often worked with.

The citizens pointed out that these were *their* elected officials who have sought and counted on union support yet turned invisible when simple shove was needed.

These are officials that had supported the job plans for the most neglected pool of work-hungry residents in the state! Yet both city and county councils held their pre-election sessions without moving forward as allowed on needed steps.

"Never again," said Sheila Cochran, secretary-treasurer of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council to 750 stirred-up union members at Serb Hall March 7, "look for our help in your races if you disappear when we most need you!"

Political cowardice caused these needless delays in job creation projects that could be operational right now for hundreds ready to go to work. Officials who should care apparently don't -- despite campaign promises.

City poverty was in runaway existence long before there was a formal recession -- and long before the more well-to-do began feeling the pinch and started to demand action. Back then you could argue a lack of political will or clarity, but not now, not in any way.

Community groups - 17 belong to the Milwaukee Jobs Act Coalition -- have started demanding rather than pleading for help in this crisis.

The act would put young people to work year-round in nonprofits and small businesses, employ residents in maintaining foreclosed properties, and also challenge the business community by requiring community reinvestment from beneficiaries of taxpayer money, fairly simple checks to make sure that jobs with good benefits would be cre-

ated by taxpayer supported businesses and that businesses would be accountable for the jobs they promise.

Yet only pockets of the mainstream media reported some major protests about the delay when more than 250 people March 9 set up chairs for absent aldermen in the city rotunda in a mock hearing to replace a canceled official hearing. While a majority of the council backs the job action, only Milele Coggs and Anthony Zielinski showed up.

The moving finger of guilt for the delay -- according to civil servants at City Hall and other sources outside the coalition -- pointed to Common Council President Willie Hines who has given lip service to the jobs act yet worked mightily behind the scenes to prevent quick approval. Insiders told me he even hinted at withholding committee appointments and community grants funding to get the delay until after the April 3 election.

To understand the juking and jiving, one need look no further than Hines' firebrand opponent for his District 15 seat in that April election along with the clear trail of allegiance in Hines' campaign finance reports.

The idea of the coalition was "Draft It, Introduce It, Pass It!" - a clarion rallying cry, unless you are a business used to controlling politicians through contributions and worrying about what you have to promise the voters in agreeing to help create more jobs. Hines has historic opposition to bold and broad jobs action that might put him in trouble with his key financial supporters - the development community.

Playing up to them may well be important to progress in his inner city district, but progress for whom? You need only roam the streets of his district to see the disrepair and neglect that reflect not on the residents but on their alderman.

Despite what he told WMCS radio listeners March 12 about how it is mainly residents of the area who support him, the finance reports reveal solid maximum contributions (\$394) from developers and business groups in the \$120,00 plus he raised in one year. These include contributions from both businesses within his district and outside it.

Hines' slow-walk, some insiders suggest, would allow him to fudge the language affecting business requirements, comforting the developers.

He is also opposed in his aldermanic race by a strongly supported union candidate, a former organizer for SEIU who gave up secure re-election to the Milwaukee County Board because of outspoken anger about unemployment in Hines' district and the neglect of neigh-

Analysis

borhoods that is directly any alderman's business.

Eyon Biddle has roots, family and church supporters in the region and was co-creator of the successful county jobs initiative while being an outspoken champion of getting the city's job action moving. The treasurer in his election campaign is also the most famous member of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, CFO Sheila Cochran, a champion of the inner city neighborhoods where she lives.

The disinterest of the local media in this story is another puzzling factor in the unfolding April 3 election.

Less understandable is the needless delay at the county, where language and money are already available. It's not simply politics, since Chris Abele is not opposed in his run for re-election as county executive. But he does control the purse strings and is largely responsible, according to sets of insiders, for the slow-down on the county's progressive job initiative. The delay confirms the impression that he doesn't have his act together in county administration and lacks empa-

thy with the long-standing need for jobs in the community.

It will not please Abele to find he is being described in county quarters as "Romneyesque" -- reflecting the same wealth background and inability to connect with the working class laid at the door of the leading candidate for the GOP presidential nomination.

Abele has been quite frank about wanting to avoid entanglement in partisan politics, but his definition of what that means confounds many. He was elected opposing Walker's destruction of public worker collective bargaining - he even went to Madison to signal his opposition -- but fell right into the right wing media's current interpretation that anyone who signs a recall petition is not behaving as a honorable citizen but a partisan stooge - a hard view to sell given how many have signed, and harder to sell when you've taken a public stand.

Similarly Abele has put himself at odds with progressives at the county by dancing between Republican and Democrat hires in a pretense at balance while failing to convince the public that his team yet mounts up to a coherent management system

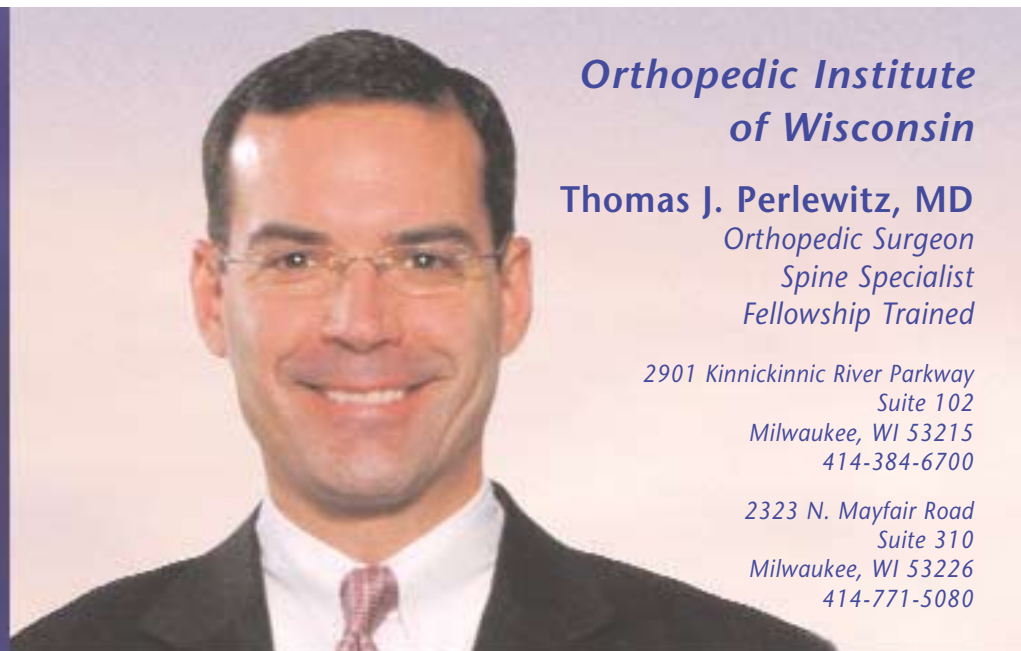
and policy. To many he comes so strongly from a management style approach and balance sheet ethics that he has yet to understand the basic give and take required in democratic government service.

Some criticize him for being a pawn of the business community while others fear his liberal credentials are a skin-deep smokescreen. Others hope he is still feeling his way, just taking a peculiarly long time in doing so.

Whatever the reasons, Abele's slow-step in making commitments and doing homework has now prevented fast movement on the "Ready to Work" initiative, an idea Biddle pushed and which the County Board and Abele approved. It uses proceeds from sales of county land to immediately put hundreds of desperate citizens to work in new jobs.

The sale to MSOE of Park East land provides \$1 million as soon as a check is cut, but that requires speed from the exec's office, which he has failed to provide, supervisors say.

Such delays will keep Ready to Work idling until probably late April.



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2 years in, but who understands health reform?

By Doug Hill

Special to Labor Press

March marks a major milestone: The two-year anniversary of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) being signed into law by President Obama. Whether you supported or opposed health reform when it passed, you are probably already benefiting or will soon benefit from its consumer protections and assistance in expanding coverage. Here's how:

If you have a pre-existing condition or disability, the ACA impacts you. Already under the

law, insurance companies are banned from discriminating against kids with pre-existing conditions.

Here in Wisconsin, 94,700 kids have conditions that could have resulted in denials of coverage but are now protected. In 2014, the one in three adults in Wisconsin with these conditions will be protected, too.

If you have private insurance coverage, the ACA lets you keep it while enhancing the coverage you receive. Aside from the pre-existing protections discussed, insurers are also banned from having lifetime limits and from dropping you because of an

honest mistake on your application. Yearly limits will be phased out by 2014.

We are also going to see more bang for our buck due to something called the Medical Loss Ratio. Fancy terms aside, this means insurers will have to spend more of your premium dollars on your medical care rather than marketing and lobbying.

Insurance is also required to offer many preventive care services (like screenings and check-ups) free. 75% of health care costs come from preventable chronic diseases like Type 2 diabetes and heart disease, so if we can get a handle on these, it'll help with costs and save lives.

If you're a woman, the ACA impacts you. Starting in 2014, insurers won't be able to charge higher premiums based on you being a woman. Currently, all of Wisconsin's most popular insurance plans charge a 40-year-old, non-smoking woman more than a 40-year-old, non-smoking man. Women also get many free preventive services aimed specifically at women's health.

If you're a small business owner or individual who is uninsured, the ACA impacts you. You'll be able to buy private insurance through a competitive marketplace called an "exchange" by 2014. By forcing insurance companies to compete, exchanges will drive down costs, guarantee choice, and put us in control. In Wisconsin last year, 62,800 small businesses with fewer than 25 employees qualified for tax credits to help with



Panels, forums and press conferences offer the public enormous opportunity to learn more about health care rules, needs, state efforts to weaken the changes and opportunities to help. One recent event brought media to Rep. Gwen Moore's office to criticize Gov. Walker's incursions. At the mike with Moore (left) and Sen. Chris Larson (back) was Robert Kraig, executive director of Wisconsin Citizen Action and an expert on health legislation.

the cost of coverage. These credits currently cover up to 35% and will increase to 50% in 2014.

For individuals, roughly 477,000 Wisconsinites with moderate incomes (for example, a family of four making up to about \$90,000) will get tax credits to help with the cost of health insurance through these new exchanges.

If you're a young adult, the ACA ensures you can stay on your parents' health plans up to the age of 26. Here in Wisconsin, 40,200 young adults are eligible to do this.

Finally, if you're a senior, the ACA impacts you. It's important to note that you still stay on

your Medicare as always, but it'll be improved in several ways. All of our state's 918,300 Medicare enrollees now get access to free preventive services such as mammograms and colonoscopies. Medicare's solvency is extended several years with a focus on preventive care, and fighting waste and fraud.

The government explains more about how health reform impacts you at www.healthcare.gov.

The author is the director of Know Your Care Wisconsin, a non-profit group devoted to educating citizens about the Affordable Care Act.

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Backing Obama

Orlando, Fla. -- It was much anticipated when the AFL-CIO's General Board voted unanimously March 13 to formally endorse Barack Obama and Joseph Biden for re-election as president and vice president of the US. But the temper in the room also shifted from tepid to enthusiastic.

"Although the labor movement has sometimes differed with the president and pushed to do more and faster, we have never doubted his commitment to working families," said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka.

The federation's 11 million members can now mobilize and have credibility with particular groups of voters, not just unionists.

Some unionists, Trumka admitted, are disappointed more jobs have not been created but are bolstered by 3.5 million more jobs compared to devastating job losses under Bush.

Trumka added yet another reason at the press conference - the lack of quality among Obama's GOP opponents, who mimic Bush's policies "that got us into this mess," he noted.