



Midwest flight attendants bedevil their CEO in marches at the airport. See Page 7.



LEFT: County workers protest privatization and job cuts at a mammoth rally. The board heard their views and so did voters in backing property tax relief and a dedicated sales tax for parks and transit. See referendum story on Page 12.



RIGHT: Lawyer Barbara Zach Quindel discusses election protection Nov. 4 with state election board leader Kevin Kennedy. Story on Page 5.

AFL-CIO MILWAUKEE

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MILWAUKEE AREA LABOR COUNCIL, AFL-CIO

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Thursday, November 20, 2008

(USPS 350-360)

## Done!

### Labor provided torrent of votes

Bush had come close in 2004, but though McCain campaigned hard he didn't come close at all in Wisconsin, and in other union-heavy Midwestern states.

The efforts of union volunteers were a major factor as Barack Obama won by 14% in Wisconsin, 16.5% in Michigan, 10% in Minnesota, 7% Pennsylvania and even by 4% in tighter Ohio.

Labor 2008, the nationwide union campaign, really kicked it out, adding divisions and councils to address veterans directly, laying out the race issues in honest terms, reassuring hunters and leaders out in tandem to rural as well as urban communities.

Some 3.9 million union households were visited, 5.5 million calls were made and more than 2 million leaflets were dis-

**Results** continued Page 2

### Now will labor get its big wish?

The Employee Free Choice Act was discussed only peripherally during the presidential debates, but it drove organized labor's nonstop campaigning for Barack Obama -- with exceptional results. See above.

The legislation known as EFCA shapes up as the most important promise

**Related stories**  
Page 9

Obama made to unions. And they really delivered. But should they flex their muscle at the new president immediately? Or do they give him time to breathe and maneuver?

More essentially, has he got the power? While the election results look good in Congress,

**EFCA** continued Page 8



The entrance to the labor council became a temporary perch for an enormous Obama-Biden sign destined for the parking lot at 633 S. Hawley Rd. **BELOW:** The whole building became an election madhouse for weeks before November 4. Here volunteer union families turned Yatchak Hall into an assembly line for yard signs.



## The unsung key to Obama victory

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

Barack Obama's campaign was built on the values and lessons of positive community organizing.

These are hardly the confrontational tactics derided at the Republican Convention. Real community organizing requires a temperament that Sarah Palin doesn't have - and that, candidly, most media pundits left and right also lack, since they live on sarcasm, sly winks and skeptical derision of those who disagree.

The organizing that Obama and his team embodied emphasized invitation and tranquility. Be peaceful and non-threatening, invite people in, make them feel part of achieving noble goals.

All that resonated in the corners of quite a speech election night, 90 minutes north of where Milwaukeeans echoed what was simultaneously happening in D.C., Seattle, and probably invisibly in country lanes where there were no cameras.

When TV about 10 p.m. Central Time announced the victory, people erupted on residen-



Barack Obama, elected the 44th US president. tial blocks, in dorms, at hotel parties and just in living rooms with cheers, weeping and even amazement -- and yet also, as in Grant Park, enforcing upon themselves the avoidance of boos and mockeries of the defeated.

It was a demeanor of civility that Obama had insisted upon for his campaign, not discounting his knack for throwing a sharp elbow when needed.

Boos and derision have been a hallmark of American politics for the last eight years.

**Organized** continued Page 4

## Earthquake without a landslide

November 4 probably denied his most ferocious supporters the landslide they longed for. But in the end, it was exactly the sweeping historic victory Barack Obama and his team had planned -- and probably expected, fingers crossed and fear mixed with confidence, in the weeks leading up to the massive nationwide vote.

It ran according to a dream script, not because of where the votes came from (though that was pretty darn good) but because of how the narrative unfolded.

Ballots still being counted weeks after the election gave Obama more votes than any previous winning president -- 65 million -- and a remarkably easy 6% margin over John McCain

Initially what dominated discussions was the meaning of this story to all of America. The racial reality -- son of a black father from Kenya and a white mother from Kansas -- overshadowed the true dimensions of the victory.

"All those years I told my children they could grow up to be anything they wanted to be,"

said the exuberant but tearful African-American mother from SEIU. "I didn't believe it when I said it. But now I do."

"It is just wonderful, wonderful," said a white suburban grandmother at a Tuesday night party in Glendale. "Yes, but it didn't shut them up," noted her

companion, who had been listening to election results on the conservative radio station that couldn't resist providing sneering comments along the way.

So as nice as it would have been to turn the Dakotas, Georgia and even Mississippi

**Obama** continued Page 4

# Results

From Page 1

tributed at worksites. In the final four days before the election, Labor 2008 picked up in an endless clock-round stream and in states like Wisconsin added websites, video and email alerts.

It all paid off. Union voters supported Obama 67% to 30% over John McCain. In the top

battleground states the difference was even starker, with union members going for Obama 69% to 28% -- a 41-point margin.

McCain won voters ages 65 and up, but active and retired union members older than 65 went for Obama by a 46-point margin. Obama carried a greater percentage of whites than either Gore (2000) or Kerry (2004).

While McCain won among veterans, union veterans went for

Obama by a 25-point margin.

Union members got a lot of contact from their unions about the election, with more than 80% receiving union mail, more than 80% union publications, 59% live phone calls and 32% work-site flyers. 21% of voters in this presidential election were in a union or union household, judging by early numbers that are likely to climb higher.

## Nice try, Tommy

Still, there was some gamesmanship going on when former Republican Gov. Tommy Thompson moaned aloud that "I can't believe we got clobbered that badly. The whole thing is blue! Wisconsin is the bluest of the blue!"

Nice try, Tommy. Shrewder heads looked harder. In local politics Wisconsin is still tightly contested. The margin in the Senate remains at three. In the Assembly, Democrats take control at long last, but only 52-46 with one independent, after picking up five seats.

Thompson was simply trying to lay the groundwork to blame the Democrats for what doesn't get fixed in Madison, knowing full well that school funding, sales tax legislation for Milwaukee (see Page 12), moving ahead on highways and health care, making the tax code more equitable - all that and much more still require cooperative bipartisan compromise.



The election watch party at a suburban hotel exploded with joy and some amazement when TV networks declared Barack Obama the next president Nov. 4. It was a scene repeated around the nation. Yet one of the candidates sharing this celebration would discover the next day that the final vote didn't go his way. See opposite page.

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# Calendar

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

**Wednesday, November 26**

**MALC Executive Council**  
2 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

**Wednesday, December 3**

**Monthly Delegate Meeting**  
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

**Tuesday, December 9**

**2nd Annual SDC Symposium on Poverty**  
Job Fair, Speakers, Dinner  
All-Day Event, Midwest Airlines Center  
For more information [www.cr-sdc.org](http://www.cr-sdc.org), or call (414) 906-2804

**Friday, December 19**

**Holiday Open House**  
Milwaukee Area Labor Council  
Noon-4 p.m., Yatchak Hall, 633 S. Hawley Rd.

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# At end of this race, the good doctor wasn't in

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

In the early morning rush hours of November 5, a lone dapper figure in an overcoat walked along Lake Drive carrying a sign and waving to cars speeding by.

The hand-lettered sign said THANK YOU.

The dapper man was Sheldon Wasserman, whose supporters at that point still clung to hopes of his becoming the new State Senate voice in District 8, bouncing incumbent Alberta Darling.

It was not to be. During election night he had led much of the count in the North Shore suburbs and parts of East Side Milwaukee. By Wednesday afternoon and the absentee ballot results, Wasserman was 2,000 votes behind out of nearly 100,000 cast.

It was one of two whisker-thin losses in the Milwaukee area that union forces were disappointed by, since in Oak Creek/South Milwaukee Assembly District 21, incumbent Republican Mark Honadel squeaked by with less than 700

votes over a hard charge from retired military man Glen Brower. There the margin was 14,710 to 14,061 (51-49 percent, just like the Wasserman-Darling race).

The closeness should give both GOP incumbents pause, especially since Honadel returns to an Assembly now dominated by Democrats thanks to five pickups around the state and Darling returns to a Senate where the Dems retain the same degree of control.

One local runaway victory pleased unions since they had solidly backed Sandra Pasch as a replacement in the Assembly for Wasserman. So District 22 easily stayed in Democratic hands.

Pasch and Wasserman actually shared an election night event at the Hilton on Pt. Washington Rd., at a moment when the partygoers still thought the nursing professor would be joined in Madison by the physician she was replacing.

There is a moral in Wasserman's loss, but it has nothing to do with actual worth of the candidates. Wasserman's



Sheldon Wasserman applauds Obama's televised victory, and the ease with which Sandra Pasch (right) won the right to replace him in the Assembly, but the next afternoon the final vote left him short of ousting Alberta Darling in the State Senate.

record of penny-pinching was far deeper than Darling's. He had the better story to tell of frugality and consistency, and assuredly was the hardest worker. And he had told that story cleverly in commercials while pounding the doors.

The mistake he made will now serve as a lesson to other politicians - don't trust those sup-

posed nonpartisan groups that come a-calling offering a benign no-tax-increase pledge. They may assure you that they won't let it be used deceptively. Don't believe them, particularly if you are a Democrat.

That's what happened to Wasserman, who signed and stuck with a "no tax increase" pledge from the Americans for

Tax Reform, a Republican leaning interest group that quietly also supports flat tax proposals.

But in the ins and outs of legislative maneuvering in Madison, a lot of choices are made that could be interpreted as supporting tax increases. Both sides did it -- Darling with the gasoline tax, Dr. Wasserman in fighting for a cigarette tax, arguing that "I might have signed a pledge, but I also took a Hippocratic Oath."

The radio talk shows fumed, with careful calculation, leading to Darling robocalls featuring Mark Belling and Charles Sykes. (The folks in River Hills like to pretend they're too smart to listen to these guys, but apparently they secretly do.)

That combined with TV ads and mailed flyers excoriated Wasserman, who set aside his humorous hope-filled campaign to respond in kind, attacking Darling on the gasoline tax and her flip-flops on stem cell research.

The race turned ugly, and the Republicans tend to win ugly races. She did.

The moral: When a group pleading nobility approaches any politician with a supposedly neutral no-tax pledge, run the other way. Because they will warp it to use it.

## Back to the future for Obama

The name was familiar to news readers, even those who forgot he had served as President Clinton's chief of staff, when John D. Podesta was announced as the leader of Barack Obama's transition team.

Those on the lookout for reliable research and commentary had long been familiar with his efforts. The research group he founded in 2003, Center for American Progress, has provided some of the most quoted progressive reports and research and served as something like a government in exile for Democrats.

Joining Podesta on Obama's transition team were Valerie Jarrett, a longtime adviser, and Peter Rouse, Obama's Senate chief of staff.

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# Obama

From Page 1

over to the Democratic side -- something unheard of a year ago and not quite there in 2008 -- this was rather like a military campaign, a general's feint with his troops to draw the opposition into disarray.

The real attack couldn't be fought off. Obama actually flipped nine states from red to blue Election Day. So some wanted 16, but get real! Nine was enormous.

The continuing radio squawk was the divisive partisanship that Obama took apart with dignity in his election eve speech. But his admonition to America ran both ways - to cut out the sneering but also not to get angry or disheartened by it.

There are different political philosophies operating in America. Obama's supporters blame blindly following the scenario put in play by the current stock of Republicans and made worse by the people conducting John McCain's campaign -- a flailing manufacturing of ever-shifting demons: taxes, big government, radicals, pro-choicers and wanna-be millionaires like Joe the Plumber.

Obama took a large chunk out of such demons, but he didn't drive a stake in its heart. Too many Americans were hung up on the GOP brand (at least in the abstract, not the way the brand



Veterans speak up for Obama at a building trades meeting.

operated this year).

Pointedly in his speech, Obama reminded them of the real original GOP maverick from Illinois, the unity and mutual reliance invoked by the party's first president and one of his main heroes, Abraham Lincoln. What an irony went unmentioned: Obama began his campaign in Lincoln's Springfield and ensured victory in Virginia, where the Civil War concluded.

There was urgency in Obama's call for healing. It's certainly not unusual for politicians to swear to unity and pledge to work with the other side, but it is unusual to mean it. Americans still recall deeply being taken in by George W. Bush eight years ago on just such a promise.

Today, though, the hole is so deep that everyone will be needed to claw out. Bush's unusually

gracious acceptance of the president-elect may be a tacit recognition of how deep he dug that hole and what landmines were inserted along the way.

What made climbing out seem even possible was Obama's remarkable combination of serenity and determination. Looking back, his entire campaign was built on expectations that he would face a divided nation. His values embrace America's middle but his solutions insist that the disadvantaged have long been essential to that middle and must reunite with them, just as the states were reunited by Lincoln.

Now all the bogeymen have been laid to rest (white blue collar workers wouldn't vote for him - but they did! -- people would promise one thing to pollsters and vote the other way - but they didn't! -- the nasty ads and flyers would hurt -- they apparently boomeranged).

But even as America celebrated a new maturity in both race relations and governmental action, political divisions re-emerged too quickly. Cries of Doomsday! Socialism! Taxes! already sweep the land.

Now they sound petty, unreal. Empty words without vision, the refuge of an unloyal opposition, the thoughtless attitudes that nearly unknit an entire nation. Even without a landslide their power has melted.

-- Dominique Paul Noth



Volunteers at a rally of 100 union members in the labor council parking lot sign up for Labor 2008 walks the Saturday ahead of the election.

# Organized

From Page 1

Somehow Obama and his campaign imposed discipline on hundreds of thousands of hires and volunteers -- stay calm and focused, greet hatred with ideas and patience, deflect personal attacks.

The GOP dismissed all this as fantasy, but today they know how well it worked. The campaigners were so successful around the country that it became a news story when one showed temper or got physical.

Grant Park concluded the best campaign in my memory. Surrounded by family and his faithful, knitting together in loops, but with new hints, the themes of change he represents and the hope he knows he brings, Obama was doing something else.

Certainly he moved fast after that momentous day at the polls, and even as we went to press was dealing with a remarkable list of names and supporters to draw upon.

But was I alone in detecting impatience? A warning not to expect instant results and yet an eagerness to put campaign fever behind him and get on with governance?

As he said, he has to hurry: "This victory alone is not the change we seek. It is only the chance for us to make that change."

## THE CAUTION FLAG

There are some flags needed in the Obama enthusiasm. What has been suggested for two years in the Labor Press seems true.

Obama is nowhere near as liberal as the McCain forces painted him. His progressive style lacks the showiness of many groups that support him. It is his preference to work behind the scenes on reform.

News reports now reveal several occasions when Obama may have listened to his advisers but then went his own way, sometimes dangerously. Against advice he directly addressed religion. He cut off the sort of media shopping channel use of his wife and children that many networks offered.

He is capable of bold moves when needed, but he prefers to make sure of his support before he jumps. If he is not comfortable, he will wait until he is.

Nowhere was this clearer than in the economic crisis, where he immediately laid out several conditions that must be part of any economic package and tried to get McCain to mutually agree (they were all put in) -- but he let the experts work out the details. There was no grandstanding, nor pretense of bolting into the room and saying, "I am in charge!"

(One bureaucrat I spoke to in D.C. wondered if this finally meant "a president who wouldn't call a meeting for show but to actually get something done!")

Obama has an affinity for technology, for educators, for cities and for the Rust Belt but mainly for the working class, which we now describe as the middle class. The way the election unfolded supported his strengths. But what he has is not dominating power in Congress. Both the House and the Senate are Democratic, but not filibuster-proof, and some of those Democrats are quite conservative while some Republicans are quite open to his platform.

Here and there he has the votes to demand agreement, and he can expect some of his stronger supporters, including unions, health care advocates and anti-war advocates to push him to enforce those demands. But he doesn't have that Bush-style temperament to insist without consensus across the board.

That will affect the pace in which he solves health care, energy needs, infrastructure rebuilding, majority sign-up (the Employee Free Choice Act), the realities of Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, the pace of immigration reform, action in the Congo, fair trade and other issues seething in the background of our policies.

By voting for him, Americans had better be ready for a president who thinks and measures. The people gave him an enormous victory. Now they have to give him the patience to maneuver.

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**UFCW**

# Election protection gets global scrutiny

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

More election photos on Page 11

The world came to Milwaukee to watch November 3 and 4. It dropped into the Milwaukee Area Labor Council and the adjacent rooms at 633 S. Hawley Rd., where unions were employing predictive dialers and also old-fashioned hardline phones as well as more modern cell phones. Labor 2008 leaders explained the neighborhood walks among union households. Leaders of the state AFL-CIO showed off the packets of information being delivered to doors and worksites.

Election Day the world visited the so-called boiler-room, with more lawyers per square inch than the courthouse, all checking computer screens and chirping phones as they engaged in nonpartisan Election Protection.

And the world was fairly amazed that there were fewer alarms than expected and an enthusiastic willingness to show off the bowels of the operation.

The world in this case was a squad of foreign visitors organized by the Department of State. Milwaukee was a requested stop for the International Visitor Leadership Program. The visitors came from Europe, Morocco and Saudi Arabia, influential officials, witty, curious and not at all hesitant to ask questions.

The program is set up to explain the dynamics of the US electoral process, which sometimes must sound like the Old West to countries where citizens are deeply documented at public functions (and also have governments paying for things like health care). It was something of a revelation to learn how privacy rules and state rights had combined in the US system to create so many cross-checks for safety, and how the concerns the America's media had written about -- sped overseas on the Internet -- were mainly glitches

and bad organization among volunteers or one-day hires.

Rep. Barbara Toles, a member of the state Assembly (District 17), facing no opposition and free for the day to work Election Protection, helped explain why so many legislators opposed restrictive identification systems. "We want everyone to vote," noted Toles, offering examples of how imposing requirements such as photo IDs could easily become a way of penalizing poorer people and citizens of color. "Too many of us have it in our heritage how these requirements were used to suppress votes," she warned. "Our families fought for years to eliminate those."

The other purposes of the US program include witnessing the final stages of the 2008 presidential campaign and understanding how domestic policy issues impact foreign policy decisions.

**K**evin Kennedy, director of the Wisconsin Accountability Board, who may have been making some notes of his own on how to protect the electorate, also answered questions from the group.

Members clearly had heard something more ominous than reality about Milwaukee in 2004. They had several questions about fraud and some were surprised that the penalties even for attempting to register Mickey Mouse to vote could lead to prison time.

Here they were in the same room with the lawyers and volunteers from four years ago, who explained how the problems back then turned out not to be fraud or any of those strange headlines but confusion, education of poll workers, and poor management systems. In a few cases they were felons trying to vote before they were "off paper," but most of those turned out to be poll worker mistakes and not deliberate.

This time around may have been rather dull for the visitors. Poised to head off to any poll station in trouble, ready to jump to answer a phone question, checking locations and databases on their computers, the Election Protection experts had nothing but routine calls. The few worries could be blamed on correctable slipups in polling place management.

**T**he visitors, part of 92 sent by the State Department around the county, laughed easily and followed along with the explanations.

They were as excited as the Americans to see if Barack Obama could win, amazed by how few nasty moments occurred and clearly impressed and even moved that so many professionals and bureaucrats were devoted to the principle of one person-one vote.

Accompanying the visitors were Suzanne Ginsburg for the State Department and Sharon and Rod DePue for the International Institute.

The visitors included:

Bosnia-Herzegovina: Damir Dzeba, secretary-general of the youth organization (HDZ BiH).  
Finland: Roope Eero Ilmaria Mokka, development director of Demos Helsinki.

Germany: Marina Schuster, Free Democratic Party member of the German Bundestag

Latvia: Viesturs Silenieks, adviser to the speaker of the parliament.



FROM LEFT: Anas Binsaeed of Saudi Arabia and Abdelwahad Driouche of Morocco with Rep. Barbara Toles.

Macedonia: Emilia Gjeroski, counselor for public relations, municipality of Bitola.  
Morocco: Abdelwahad Driouche, administrative adviser to the Chamber of Representatives.  
Poland: Konstanty Adam Dombrowicz, CEO for business development and public rela-

tions.  
Saudi Arabia: Anas Binsaeed, staff of the Shura Council Inter-Parliamentary Unit.  
United Kingdom: Benjamin Idris Jones, foreign affairs and defense adviser for the Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Party.



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# Obama on standby, asking Midwest to fly right

Midwest Airlines has not exactly been famous of late for making good decisions. So add this to self-imposed image goofs. The company dismissed the urgent concern of a candidate for president, only to see that candidate become the president-elect.

If that didn't cause unwanted attention to management's heavy feet, how about the enterprising, media-drawing protests by pilots and flight attendants?

On October 10, candidate Barack Obama wrote a letter reminding Midwest CEO Timothy Hoeksema that his fast-moving nationwide campaign had been chartering Midwest heavily because of its "history of management and employee partnership."

But no longer. Obama had learned that 75% of the flight attendants were "furloughed" and the few that might be taken back were facing demands to cut their wages "up to 50%." Pilots face similar losses and demands. In the past, both groups had taken pay and benefit cuts to help the airline survive and were never industry leaders in cost.

The employees, the then-Illinois senator wrote Hoeksema, felt their issues were falling on deaf ears, and he called for good faith negotiations and a concern to protect jobs. He asked management to clarify its intentions and to re-engage in the collective bargaining process. Hoeksema instead replied that he himself had suffered, too, taking a cut in his millions in salary and stock options.

The degree of his suffering was showcased by angry pilots, media in tow, who picketed at his Waukesha home. The pilots also drew attention from an Obama surrogate, Sen. John Kerry, the 2004 Democratic presidential candidate, equally concerned at how fuel prices that have since fallen were used by the company to savage its workforce and

give up routes that other airlines snapped up. Midwest, switching from its most respected planes and personnel, is farming out much of its offerings.

The courts will rule in December if the labor agreements with the pilots and attendants were broken by Midwest's deals to lease Republic Airways jets and crews.

In the wings is yet another senator, Herb Kohl, who last April held hearings questioning the impact on jobs and related airlines of the merger of Delta and Northwest. Now his hearings have living breathing examples.

On Halloween, the flight attendants underscored their points with protests at Mitchell Airport. First they set up shop in Concourse D offering passengers a lollipop as a treat and then revealing to the public how they had been tricked -- since 75% of the Midwest flights had been outsourced to other airlines, with the Midwest name painted on the outside of the leased planes.

Delivering the message to Channel 12 and other newscasts was a veteran embodiment of the bright manner and efficiency associated with Midwest attendants -- Catherine (Cat) Reed, also vice president of the Midwest council of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA.

"You can't outsource our quality service," Reed pointed out in her always cheerful tone. "You can't pretend that you're not tearing the airline apart."

As she spoke upstairs, a dozen more flight attendants and their families were marching next to cars in the ticket lane with T-shirts complaining about Midwest and posters that painted Hoeksema as a Halloween devil. The shrinking company is now engaged in mandatory federal mediation over the issues, the unions report.



Cat Reed hands out lollipops in Concourse D and explains Midwest's failures to its workers for the TV cameras on Halloween.



Midwest pilots share their problems with Sen. John Kerry.



Cars arriving at Mitchell Airport were met by flight attendants with colorful T-shirts and devilishly funny signs.



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# EFCA

From Page 1

some races are still unsettled, the economy has some desperate immediate concerns and not everybody with a D after their name (for Democrat) is on board

Do Obama and his union allies have the power to deliver in the face of business' growing fury?

That lays out the key situation that will unfold over the next several months and that unions will be watching carefully.

They won't be alone. What happens will help define the new president for many progressive factions pushing him on issues such as immigration, the war and health care.

With all the pressures for change on the president, should unions realistically expect him to act within a few months or should they back off?

In our companion piece on Page 9, a noted economist spells out the essential need for the legislation known as EFCA. But Milwaukee heard Obama's commitment to the union movement

in person at his eloquent Laborfest speech.

Even as EFCA sits atop the wish list for the AFL-CIO and all other labor federations, it sits atop the hit list of the US Chamber of Commerce and union-hating companies such as Wal-Mart.

But that in perspective. Business groups tend to automatically resist legislation that organized labor backs, be it local jobs ordinance and paid sick days, or Project Labor Agreements.

But they are seriously fearful of EFCA. The Wall Street Journal reports that business groups have already sunk \$50 million into the campaign this year and have worked ferociously to defeat candidates supporting labor. They expect to spend four times more.

November 4 did not end the power of lobbyists and the other business groups with considerable leverage. The awareness among sympathetic Democrats in Congress and among union leaders is that this is not a battle to enter unless fully armed, ready to anticipate the maneuvers and the compromise proposals.

The avowed business resistance is a shame because an embrace of EFCA by labor and management would do several things. It would give management an avenue through organized workers to improve productivity and efficiency, as many companies already have, and it would give workers a sense of partnership with American companies that is desperately needed. But by making a fight of it, businesses are guaranteeing a longer slower growth in wages and security for American workers.



The number of international union presidents who came to Wisconsin to motivate their members or lead major rallies was a signal of how deeply organized labor wanted to win – and how much it is relying on passage of the Employee Free Choice Act.

The other economic needs are also great. The AFL-CIO itself has laid out ingredients that should be in an immediate stimulus package, and Obama on Nov. 7 started pushing for it to happen under President Bush. That includes restructuring mortgages to keep people in their homes; extending unemployment assistance for jobless workers; aiding states so they can continue to provide vital public services; pushing job-creating infrastructure investments in schools, roads, bridges and clean renewable energy.

That along with regulating the financial market and fixing the broken health system might be easier with an EFCA around, but Bush will never pass it.

Also, does the new Congress have EFCA's back? Some maturity is needed in the labor community to face up to this.

The Democrats have certainly gained at least 20 House seats, but journalists put too much emphasis on the magic "60" number in the Senate, the supposed filibuster proof majority. Six pickups are already in from Nov. 4 and three more were hanging fire as we went to press. Republican losses in the Senate may also provide some sympathetic GOP senators with cover.

Both the new president and vice president will resign upon elevation, and both come from states where Democratic governors (Delaware and Illinois) will



Introducer/secretary-treasurer, John Jorgensen, the Milwaukee Area Labor Council's chief operating officer, Sheila Cochran, and the union's international president (at right), John Williams, accompanied by international VP Ken Rigmaiden.

replace them. Some senators, including members of the GOP, may be tapped for Obama's administration. The fuzziness of the Senate could take months to unfold.

The naïve have to stop looking at the D or the R after a legislator's name as if that provided some sort of answer. Some Republicans will support EFCA and some Democrats won't.

And don't forget we are talking about a change in labor law. Here's a real trifecta that will be needed: the White House, the Congress and the essential third ingredient - the courts.

Obama can now appoint Democrats to be the majority at the National Labor Relations Board and that could have a quick impact, even a reversal of questionable rulings after eight years of Republican domination. But the federal courts are also open to businesses that want to fight labor rulings, and if EFCA passes as legislation, expect an immediate court challenge.

The bottom line lends hope and justifies how powerfully unions turned out for Obama on this issue.

But any union member who expects the Employee Free Choice Act as an immediate result of Obama's election is also in the market to buy the Bridge to Nowhere.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

## History lesson

In 2000, Al Gore beat George Bush in Wisconsin by fewer than 6,000 votes.

In 2004, John Kerry did better with 11,400 votes more than Bush, but that was the tightest margin in the nation -- four-tenths of a percentage point.

Obama's victory margin over McCain in 2008, fueled by union households, was 412,293 votes.

Yes, McCain ran a few thousand votes behind what Bush did in the GOP-dominated counties surrounding Milwaukee (for instance, McCain drew 9,837 fewer votes in Waukesha County than Bush in 2004), but the movement toward Obama reflected not just less enthusiasms for McCain but far more souring on Bush -- and an election that didn't seem close from the start.

Wisconsin was No. 2 in the nation in bringing out its voting-age population. It wound up less percentage-wise than 2004 at a little more than 70% of voting-age population.

But that was remarkable because Wisconsin had no statewide contest (such as a Senate race or governor race) to add to the turnout.

Yet Wisconsin was only behind Minnesota (75%) where a senate race between Norm Coleman and Al Franken was so close it required a recount.

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# Labor's bill could be real rescue package

By Mark Weisbrot

Special to Labor Press

While it hasn't gotten much attention, our elections this November may have literally decided the future of organized labor. This is important not just for the 15.7 million workers who happen to be in unions, but for the vast majority of the 154 million-member US labor force.

The wages, benefits, and working conditions of most employees are affected by collective bargaining even if they don't have a union. For example, employers who want to keep unions out will sometimes have to offer their workers such amenities as health insurance, though there is nothing like the collec-

tive voice at work to lead them to do the right thing.

One of the most important problems that our economy has faced for the last 30 years has been stagnating real wages. With inflation now running at 10.6% over the last quarter, the problem appears to most people to be rising prices -- but for more than two decades prior to the past year, inflation had been tame. The real - inflation-adjusted -- wage of the typical employee barely increased at all over the whole 34 years from 1973-2007.

This is amazing when we consider that productivity - the amount that workers produce per hour - increased quite substantially over that period.

Measured very conservative-

ly, if we take "usable productivity" - the increased production that we can expect to be reflected in rising wages - it rose by 48% from 1973-2007!

So our economy grows but, unlike in the past, most employees do not share in the gains.

One important reason for this great leap backwards is that the rights of workers to organize and bargain collectively have been sharply curtailed over the past three decades.

For example, employees do still have the legal right to petition for a federally-run election at their workplace, in which workers can vote on whether to join a union. (To get such an election, they need the signatures

of at least 30% of the employees.)

But after the employees get enough signatures, employers very often intimidate workers through threats and firings before the vote is held.

The Center for Economic and Policy Research has estimated that one in five workers who are actively involved in a union organizing drive can expect to be fired. Many others are "persuaded" to vote against the union through a long, captive audience campaign of employer threats and harassment.

As a result of these tactics, only about 12% of employees are organized in unions today, as compared with 35% in the 1950s.

Reform legislation called the Employee Free Choice Act would give employees a fighting chance to regain some of their lost rights. This bill would mandate that an employer recognize the union if it obtains the signatures of a majority of employees. There would be no need for the long and costly -- especially to the workers who are fired -- election campaign.

A poll by Global Strategies Group this year found that 68% of middle-class Americans support the Employee Free Choice Act. Polls also indicate that tens of millions would join a union if they had the choice.

The bill passed the House 241-185 but was filibustered by Republicans in the Senate. Until Nov. 4 it's been a party-line split in the Senate (except for support from Republican Sen. Arlen Specter). It needs a Democratic president and something close to 59 Democrats in the Senate in order to pass.

This law would probably change Americans' lives more than any legislation since the New Deal brought us Social Security. The political influence of millions of new union members would also bring us closer to such basic reforms as universal health care. It's all long overdue.

Mark Weisbrot is co-director of [www.cepr.net](http://www.cepr.net), the Center for Economic and Policy Research, in Washington, D.C.

[MinuteManMedia.org](http://MinuteManMedia.org)

## Unions are waiting to act

Just as states are at the forefront of tackling health coverage and global warming, they are also at the forefront of legislation that seeks to give workers a free choice to organize. There are now 22 laws in 12 states that grant certain public and private employees the right to form unions through the majority sign-up process.

These states are laboratories for public policy, showing that majority sign-up works and is a proven and widely-used process. But these states also underscore

the need for federal universality represented in the Employee Free Choice Act.

While many states and cutting-edge companies have adopted majority sign-up with great success as an alternative to outdated union recognition systems, the vast majority of America's workers are denied the fair and democratic process that majority sign-up provides.

These state laws granting majority sign-up rights typically just cover public employees, and private employees must rely on

their employer to voluntarily agree to recognize their union through this process. Surprisingly, several have.

National labor policy needs to catch up to this innovation in states and the private sector, states the AFL-CIO.

Majority sign-up using state laws and voluntary cooperation of labor and management has already allowed half a million Americans to join unions in the past five years. That's many more workers using this method than those organized through the National Labor Relations Board election process during the same period.

And these may not be the workers you first think of.

Since 2003, majority sign-up has reflected diverse professions, regions, and successful companies in the United States.

These numbers encompass just what has been reported from these unions: AFSCME, AFT, CWA, FLOC, IAMAW, IBEW, IBT, IFPTE, SEIU, UAW, UFCW, UNITE HERE, and USW.

Millions more stand to benefit if our laws are changed to reflect the wishes of America's workers who want union representation to improve their wages, benefits, and to secure a brighter future for their families.

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# Which excuses did you hear after he won?

The polls hadn't even closed when the myths and oversimplifications started, trying to explain away Barack Obama's elevation to the White House. Which ones did you hear?.

**There was such hatred for George W. Bush that John McCain could never overcome it.**

Certainly Americans feel duped and misled, but ask the people who would like to see Bush impeached. They've failed largely because hatred is absent. Most people just believe Bush was foolish, a bad and stubborn steward of policies that his most diehard supporters suggest otherwise might have worked. (They should be thankful they never lived in New Orleans.)

They tend to blame his incompetence and those around him, but they'd still offer him a beer. Maybe that's why McCain never abandoned Bush's foreign policy or much of his domestic outlook, embracing even the rhetoric until the final

week. He certainly doomed himself to be viewed as a Bush appendage. But with clear separation, he would have lost the core Republican voters.

**Without the timing of the economic collapse and the need for a \$700 billion bailout, Obama would never have won.**

Obama certainly didn't influence the timing; it was the consequence of dangerous laxity and hubris by the Bush administration. The timing did push aside some other Obama strengths - opposition to the Iraq war, for instance, an issue many think he also would have won on.

But certainly, the economy put front and center an issue Obama was well prepared for and McCain was not. If that brought clarity to the voters, so be it.

**Obama would tax Americans into poverty.**

As opposed to what? Where we are now? Since factual analysis showed he would tax less than McCain, that election ploy only gained belief if people

viewed Obama as a big fat liar. Clearly they didn't view all black people, all Democrats or even all Chicago politicians that way.

This also made a terrible argument. The future fear of being taxed into poverty sort of got flogged to bits when America had borrowed its way into poverty, sending not only jobs to foreign shores but much of our native wealth.

**The Republicans are being blamed for an economic crisis that no one saw coming.**

Don't believe it. While McCain, Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson and even departed Fed Reserve giant Alan Greenspan confessed they never thought such a collapse was possible, they had ignored warnings from labor, Democrats, Obama's economic team and even insiders.

Who had listened to such warnings? Who had recognized the shaky house of consumer confidence even as consumers were losing buying power and piling up debt? It was Obama's team. The rescue effort made people aware of how deeply they had been misled by careless deregulation and ignorance of sound financial planning.

**Sarah Palin was the necessary choice for GOP vice presidential candidate to bring the religious conservatives aboard and at the very least put the GOP in good condition to succeed in 2012,**

I actually think Democrats have started this one.. The mounting evidence is that she brought conservatives into the fold - apparently more men than women - but instantly raised questions about McCain's judgment and added doubts of his ability to get America out of its mess. Exit polls after Nov. 4 seemed to confirm that Palin was more a drag than a bonus, which explains why Democratic insiders hope that she will indeed be the new face of the GOP.

**Obama drew votes because he was black, and bleeding hearts also voted for him.**

Among blacks and perhaps some white liberals, there was the same kind of pride in Obama that led Catholics to vote for JFK in 1960. But was there a significant guilt factor among whites who wanted to appear understanding by voting for a black man?

That's sort of hard to boast about at the water cooler. There is little evidence, even less than

of whites who would vote against someone because of skin color.

**Young people, unions and minorities drove Obama's election.**

They certainly helped, but look at the polling numbers. Look at the suburbs, the boomers, the business leaders, the self-identified moderates and conservative.

Unions should be proud of what they did in this election. But the reality of the poll numbers is that Bush and McCain never saw or felt what the vast majority of Americans were going through while Obama did. The Republicans, in charge for the 21st century, had used America's abundance and productivity to weaken America. The real America was as invisible to them as the supermarket and the price of milk were to the first Bush.

It was not just the "economy, stupid." It was being stupid with the economy. -- D.P.N.

## Favorite reactions

For the first time in the nation's history, to get us out of a jam we turned to, and trusted, a black man. And, frankly, who better? For who has worked harder for, invested more in, and believed more passionately in this nation than its black citizens? None. Perhaps it high time that, collectively as a nation, we came to realize that.

*Historian Robert O. Self of Brown University.*

My thoughts go to Mt. Vernon, Virginia, the home of the first president. George Washington. I wonder what it must have been like to live at Mt. Vernon in the 18th century. Not in Mt. Vernon as George or Martha, but at Mt. Vernon as one of their slaves. I don't think about the owner of Mt. Vernon; I think about the owned.

While the Washingtons lived there, they extracted from those enslaved people, those human beings, every ounce of effort and energy that they could. This allowed the Washingtons and those who looked like them to eat a little more, stay a little warmer, and enjoy themselves just a little bit more.

Can the tortured souls of those slaves now rest a little easier with the success of a President-elect Obama?

*Wilmer Leon, TV commentator and Howard University political science teacher.*

[R]ecalling Sarah Palin's invocation of a "real America" somewhere in the small towns and cities across the nation, with their mythical Joes sporting American flags and toting rifles.

The real America was in the streets last night (November 4). Hundreds of thousands of them in Los Angeles, in front of the White House, in Chicago's Grant Park. I saw some of them on the bus as I rode home from work: "ordinary" people, dressed in less than fashionable clothes, heading downtown to share in the "historic" moment. Black and white; immigrant and native born; young and old; poor, working-class, and affluent. . .

Barack Obama is not only a black man. He is the son of an immigrant. The son of a single mother. A real American.

*James Grossman, research vice president, Chicago's Newberry Library.*

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# Watch us vote!



**TOP:** High schools students in special T-shirts crowded into the meeting room at the Milwaukee LGBT Community Center for skits and inspiration before working all afternoon of Election Day on the near south side and the central city. Even late they were encouraging adult citizens to vote. An equally large group of teens assembled in Racine. In the heavily Latino populated districts, the students handed out bilingual information about where to vote and what to bring to register at the polls. "We have a lot of problems with low voter turnout," noted Jhoselinn Perez, a junior at Riverside High and a leader of the effort through her school's Students United for Immigrant Rights. "If we want our

voice heard and our issues addressed, we need to show we care enough to vote." This grassroots initiative – rather than a school sponsored field-trip – was co-sponsored by Voces de la Frontera, SUFRIR, the Youth Voter Collective, Project Q, the Campaign Against Violence and Urban Underground.



**LEFT:** Voter registration drives, many anchored by young people, dominated election activities for months, as this march into Downtown demonstrated.



**TOP:** International visitors crowd into the working space of lawyers protecting the vote November 4. See story Page 5. **BELOW:** These visitors and many election observers also stopped by the special building on Holton St. where absentee ballots were guarded and poll workers started counting and registering the results on Election Day, a task that kept them working late into the night.



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# This time, it was the voice of the people

Ideally, referendums on a ballot are the community supporting a need. More commonly they have become an avenue for well-heeled special interests to shanghai a school bond issue or concoct a "family values" sideshow.

Around the nation, both sorts of referenda happened November 4 - everything from gay marriage to new schools to legalizing marijuana.

But, surprisingly and positively in Wisconsin, the ideal dominated and the referendums did address genuine solutions.

Conservative radio tried to dismiss the questions on the bal-

lots as "feel-good" trivialities, but in reality the questions spoke to working America struggles. Their success represented a switch from when the "me first" generation, the skepticism about change, had doomed similar ballot initiatives.

In 2008, talk radio missed the true taxpayer revolt as it blindly squealed about socialism and "tax hells."

The voters saw it differently: Individuals need government to be part of the struggle with the costs of health care. Quality parks and transit directly influence the value of homes. Workers should not be fired for

catching a cold or caring for a sick child.

The public is now telling politicians that if they don't lead on family supporting jobs, on targeting taxes to solve public needs, they will be led. Or maybe they had just better get out of the way.

In Milwaukee, such sturdy electorates crossed up, for very different reasons, two very different elected leaders.

One, County Executive Scott Walker, like conservative talk radio, has failed to move with the times. He remains married to "government is the enemy, so let me make it look as bad and clumsy as I can." (See story at [www.milwaukeeelabor.org](http://www.milwaukeeelabor.org) of the union rally that helped reverse his privatizing budget.)

Walker's attitude -- that the public doesn't want to see any tax go up even if a tax would save money in the long run or provide a more equitable solution -- at least explained his opposition to the Nov. 4 advisory county referendum. That offered a way to reduce the property tax (\$67 million a year) by increas-

## Comment

ing the sales tax a penny.

But the other leader, Mayor Tom Barrett, has made his reputation on shrewdly weighing public sentiment, on balancing labor and management, on showing that he cares about the issues of good jobs and pay, while offering himself as a friend to business.

His dance between these factions put him in opposition to the paid sick day ordinance, a story also detailed at [milwaukeeelabor.org](http://milwaukeeelabor.org) (headlined "Barrett Calls In Sick").

Barrett spoke up so late against the ordinance that he was unlikely to influence it. He surely should have realized it would pass, yet neither he nor the city attorney seemed aware how well prepared 9to5, union supporters and other community groups were to fight for it, including research, ground troops and legal insight.

On Nov. 4, nothing else on the city ballot won this big. Barrett and the business group

opposed to the idea, the MMAC, got clobbered with a 68% majority, a more than two-to-one statement that the ordinance was worthy and needed.

As we went to press, panic attacks from MMAC and City Hall, and erroneous radio interpretations of the rules, simply spurred realization that the paid sick days were minimal in cost and keep the community healthier.

If you listened carefully to the small business owners who jumped to resist in TV interviews, they were really afraid of their buddies in business who use any excuse to spike the price of goods and services. When confronted they acknowledged that keeping good workers around cut into the constant costs of retraining.

After the vote, it looked like Barrett was counting on the MMAC's threat to stop the idea in court. Now he will either have to staff the equal rights commission, find a substitute regulator, quietly back the MMAC in its longshot legal pursuit or step to the plate. His resistance has already added artificial difficulties to the regulatory preparation.

Turning back to the county, Walker may have been surprised that voters are so eager to help the parks and busses -- and perhaps even more eager to see their property taxes reduced after his years of failure to do that.

The voters in hard economic times actually gave strong support to the advisory ordinance. Sure, Walker argues that a 51% to 49% win is not strong support, but he knows that a fifth of the voters never received the county's letter about the referendum, an explanation his own county lawyers had approved as benign. So Walker expected many voters to decide just on his own loud harping, backed by the talk radio chorus.

He lost despite that. Now county supervisors will go to the state legislature to write a law tight and fine and bring it back home.

### Other healthy votes

Twenty-two state communities also had advisory referendums on health care. Obviously a yes vote would be likely -- but the margins were astounding, particularly since no particular plan was being pushed and just the basic concept -- health care as good as public officials get -- was endorsed.

In conservative and moderate communities around the state, noted Citizen Action of Wisconsin, even more than in liberal communities, the support was as high as 85%. The referendums ran far ahead of Obama.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

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