

**ENDORSED CANDIDATES****NOVEMBER 4****US PRESIDENT****Barack Obama, Democrat****US HOUSE DISTRICT 4****Gwen Moore, Democrat****WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE***incumbents unless indicated***Senate****District 4: Lena Taylor****District 6: Spencer Coggs****District 8: Sheldon Wasserman, Democrat, challenger****District 20: Clyde Winter, Independent, challenger****Assembly****District 7: Peggy Krusick****District 8: Pedro Colon****District 9: Josh Zepnick****District 10: Annette (Polly) Williams****District 12: Fred Kessler****District 14: David Hucke, Democrat, challenger****District 15: Tony Staskunas****District 16: Leon Young****District 17: Barbara Toles****District 19: Jon Richards****District 21: Glen Brower, Democrat, challenger****District 20: Christine Sinicki****District 22: Sandra Pasch, Democrat, open seat****Milwaukee County Advisory Referendum****City of Milwaukee Binding Referendum****VOTE YES ON BOTH! See Story Page 8**

Milwaukee area candidates must complete a process of questionnaires and interviews even to be considered, and recommendations require a two-thirds agreement on the Committee on Political Education (COPE) of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, representing all member unions, locals and constituency groups. COPE choices are not binding, but they represent considerable scrutiny on working family issues.

Union households are one of the most committed voting segments in the nation. On November 4, polls are open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

**Wasserman, Page 2**

Thinking through Why Obama is winning

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

What a curious race for the White House and the Congress. At this point it seems that Republicans can only win November 4 by discouraging voter turnout while the Democrats must strive for record turnout to guarantee a mandate for change.

Six months ago, there were Democratic strategists who were counting on conservative coolness to John McCain to keep his party from the polls. Some even called it the key to a Barack Obama victory.

But the surprise in this election is the goodly portion of moderate Republicans and religious conservatives actually listening favorably to Obama.

So they tell pollsters. So they told me not only in Waukesha and Ozaukee counties but also on an October visit to New York City, where I shared airports, Wall Street visits and restaurant meals with a number who identified themselves as "lifelong Republicans," "diehard conservatives" and even "former McCain admirers."

Not just financial crisis has forced them to rethink. So has a

growing understanding of the record. Obama, they conceded, had proved neither as liberal nor as tax-happy as painted — and perhaps more in touch with traditional American optimism and frugality and even broader family values than his main opponent for the presidency. His response to financial crisis also reassured them that he had the experience and temperament.

They didn't say this easily. Several remained cautious about sharing these views because they grew up disliking Democrats — and because McCain forces were telling them to either back their original candidate or stay home.

But the changing trend is not the one union leaders feared most (and are continuing to address) — white working-class voters who may use Obama's color and background to vote against their own economic interests.

They exist, but it's hard to see them gaining traction in, say, Ohio, when unemployment jumped to 7.4%. Still, it's a delicate topic.

But consider this: The statistics as well as the anecdotes suggest there are more Obama Republicans



Obama survives the flashbulbs on a Milwaukee visit emerging than Reagan Democrats.

Obama has been up 10% in recent polls of battleground states. He is ahead or competing in 10 states that went for Bush in 2004. He is also up 10% among women in polls, up among college-educated suburban white voters including soccer moms, and probably hockey moms, too, if there are such things.

He's gaining the majority among white males and definitely Latinos; he's attracting anxious financial managers — including the \$40,000 a year front office novices on Wall Street who can't believe their CEOs were that stupid.

He's raising more money than McCain from Republican strongholds, enough to plan half an hour of prime time on major networks Oct. 29. Through small Internet contributions he has been outspending the GOP two or three to one, allowing him

Obama continued Page 4

Can fake fear of fraud slow the vote?

Still in the crosshairs of presidential politics, Wisconsin is also on the firing line in accusations of voter fraud. Even if it barely exists.

Sniff the air: Determined despite the polls to turn the state for John McCain, the national Republican Party has singled out Wisconsin as a place where it can scare the public and suppress the vote. There's nothing there but the smell, but it's still going to be an odorific fight.

One nose-holding attack, discussed last month, is led by the only Republican in high office, J.B. Van Hollen, state attorney general, who was clearly pushed by GOP officials to sue his own state, insisting on a check of driver license names against two years of address changes by residents who want to vote.

A more recent effort was pushed at an angry and typically inaccurate press teleconference by the national GOP's main lawyer, Sean Cairncross, and other

party roustabouts seeking to demean anyone convicted of a major crime.

Unleashing the cry of "Felons! There Are Felons on the Streets!" it is an attempt to undermine voter registration drives among the poor by principally two organizations in Wisconsin -- ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) and Community Voters Project.

Officials of those organizations, doing due diligence on the registration deputies the government trains and they hire, uncovered fraudulent voter registrations. They fired the employees and reported their suspicions to city election officials, who passed them along to the DA's

office.

That was following the law and acting swiftly (while most of the GOP charges against ACORN around that nation have flowed out months later). It meant no voters were impersonated at the polls.

Of some 49 named in Milwaukee complaints, prosecutors have to this point found only two worth charging with anything. Noted Milwaukee District Attorney John Chisholm in an interview, "Compared to even four years ago our voter registration system and independent groups are so much better now . . . quickly reporting concerns to the election commission" - in effect preventing any fraudulent

Vote continued Page 10

Why did Chris Yatchak call Sheila Cochran a stinker at the United Way kick-off? **See Page 6.**

No fight bigger: Wasserman vs. Darling

In Milwaukee area races for the Wisconsin legislature, there is one Assembly and one Senate face-off of keen competition and high interest to organized labor.

These contests are so close and hard to track that pundits are reluctant to predict the outcome in either. Which means union votes could make the difference.

The Assembly race - see Page 3 -- is District 21 where organized labor is speaking up for political newcomer but veteran public servant Democrat Glen Brower to unseat incumbent Republican Mark Honadel.

The Senate race is between two familiar political names - a tight contest expected to make the North Shore District 8 the

most expensive legislative race in Wisconsin history.

Labor's candidate has the reputation as the hardest working legislator, respected by both sides for his dedication, frugal ways with the public dollar and independence in ideas. The state AFL-CIO also gives him the highest marks in supporting union bargaining rights and worker training programs.

Sheldon Wassermann is also a physician who has delivered some 3,000 babies hereabouts and offers practical steps to improve health care and education.

An easy victor for years in Assembly District 22 - where labor-endorsed Sandra Pasch is expected to succeed him - he

announced a year ago that would seek to step up to the Senate in District 8. That meant taking on another formidable fund-raiser and campaigner, Republican Alberta Darling.

Wasserman has the edge in speaking his mind on social issues and demonstrating legislative and ideological consistency

Talk radio, which once indicated respect for both camps, has recently been trying to boost Darling by creating petty disputes about who works harder, who is more frugal, even who says what under their breaths. It is the definition of silliness in politics. The issues and realities of this campaign are far deeper. The Democrats are seeking to strengthen their hold on the

Senate and the extreme wing of the Republican Party is pushing for Darling in what they know is a difficult election year.

Wasserman has directly raised the issue that this is not the Darling who began serving 18 years ago in District 8 when Republicans were better able to resist pressure from the extremist wing of the party. The question today is just who has she been serving?

When first elected she was regarded as a moderate, a former teacher concerned with a balanced approach to family problems. She even sat on the Planned Parenthood board. Today she has abandoned that board to earn backing from Wisconsin Right to Life. That reflects her hard shift to the right in both attitude and votes.

She is now a sure-fire conservative partisan who has fought Democratic efforts for property tax relief. She speaks up for the Milwaukee school choice program even though it doesn't even affect the bulk of her constituents (Brown Deer, Fox Point, Germantown, Mequon, Menomonee Falls, River Hills, Whitefish Bay, Glendale, Shorewood, all excluded from the choice program and largely disinterested in seeing it expand).

She waves the banner for TABOR (the GOP's unworkable tax limits to duck actual thinking about services and costs). She won't question as Wasserman does the equity and need for reform in the QE0, the qualified economic offer of 3.8% that school districts can impose when they think negotiations with teachers have stalled. She's bought into that whole Palin lipstick agenda and has been forced to explain that support to North

Shore constituents who hardly share it.

It's a far cry from what the district originally expected from Darling, yet some are confused because she can still speak one way in support of progress and then vote the other way. The top-per was her recent floor pleas for stem cell research followed by a vote that would have virtually eliminated the entire Wisconsin initiative in stem cell biology, not just the embryonic kind.

That vote smacked the North Shore hard as an example of being out of touch with a diverse district that is moving more to the middle as she crossed further into the right lane. The stem cell vote brought a devastating mailer from Wasserman discussing her flip-floppery.

Both sides are about even in campaign money, but the Democrat struck first with an effective light-hearted TV ad introducing himself and his work ethic to the voters. It was a way of extending his presence - he has always dominated in the most Democratic of the three Assembly districts within Senate District 8.

Heavy ad punches are expected from both camps in the final week before November 4, though it was unknown as we went to press how much third-party campaign money would also come flying in, bringing the danger of ugliness and last minute attacks that can't be explained in time for voters.

But there is a larger issue at work, as a Republican supporter of Darling conceded. It comes down to how broad are Barack Obama's coattails because "McCain doesn't have any," the Darling supporter said.



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One Assembly challenger forcing a tough race

Similar issues to those on Page 2 - what you say versus what you really are - have turned Assembly District 21 into a heated race of contrasts. It is also one of the seats where the Democrats hope to finally gain control of the Assembly while increasing (if folks like Wasserman win) control of the Senate.

The enthusiastic, articulate Brower may be just the candidate to do that.



Brower

Incumbent Mark Honadel has voted along hard Republican lines, but has convinced too many in Oak Creek and South Milwaukee (with two city wards thrown in) that he is in tune with both worker and small business needs. Looking at his track record of votes and philosophy pretty much debunks that. He's a reliable right-wing vote.

Brower is a different kind of Democrat. A fourth generation resident of South Milwaukee, a retired Lieutenant Colonel in the US Army and once director of policy, planning and budget for the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, he has also unveiled an economic plan that would reverse many of Honadel's votes, invest in the families and businesses of the district and seed green technology to create more jobs.

His passion for change and for smart use of taxpayer money impressed labor's COPE during interviews and there is no question he is working the district hard with lawn signs, forums and door-to-door visits.

In other races of note: There is another Senate race in the counties north of Milwaukee where no one gives the independent much of a chance - not when Clyde Winter is a political newcomer, an independent going up against long-time Republican dominance and facing a confident, entrenched Glen Grothman who considers his description as a red-meat right-winger a compliment.

What Winter does have is the Milwaukee Area Labor Council's first toe in the water of its expanded territory. Right now that's largely ideological and moral support in a region that has only a few thousand union households.

But times are changing and so are union and housing patterns. Eight years of failed right-wing policies will do that.

The incumbent's Senate District 20 contains much of Washington and Ozaukee counties including Port Washington, Cedarburg and West Bend.

Winter may have no previous political office but he is well known in the area for his newspaper columns, blogging and down-home outspokenness about issues. His ideas have certainly earned attention and are often in direct opposition to Grothman's hardline conservative approach.

Where Grothman argues that Wisconsin companies pay too much in corporate taxes, Winter pulls out the figures of how they have largely avoided this tax and asks why they are not stepping up with expansion and living wage to help the area's struggling families and job losses.

Where Grothman derides government's role in America's economic crisis, Winter sees government as a help -

"Where is the health care?" he asks - and he sees campaign finance as an important way to get lobbyist money out of the system and actually lower the cost of government. Grothman thinks the other way.



Winter

Is Winter a longshot? For sure, though there are many Republicans who don't like how Grothman attacked and replaced Mary Panzer in 2004 and then failed to deliver on better days ahead. The question is whether

the citizens of Senate District 20 are ready to see him as the obstructionist in a new era of cooperation in the legislature.



Hucke

Not quite a longshot but facing an uphill battle in District 14 is David Hucke, his second go-round against Republican incumbent Leah Vukmir. Hucke's opportunity to change the legislative tone of Wauwatosa and nearby regions may also come down to the headwind from Obama.

In Wasserman's old Assembly District (22), there is only a token Republican opponent to Pasch taking over, but labor forces are working hard to ensure her victory.

-- Election stories by Dominique Paul Noth

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The opening of every Obama for Change campaign center brought crowds like this, and Wisconsin now has 50 such offices.

Obama

From Page 1

to respond quickly to personality attacks and still have money to tell his personal story and outline his plans.

It is a clever adroit campaign, the best in memory of presidential politics.

The anger among McCain diehards is not just because their candidate is behind and their own privileged status is falling away. It's because he looks so

bad in the process. (Of course, polls are fluid and no one dares to relax in this election but the polls as I write were all in the same range.)

Obama has been a balanced steady voice with practical ideas through the economic disaster. McCain can only attack him by ignoring him, questioning his acquaintances or "alien appearance" or aloofness or "not one of us" — all innuendo dangerously close to racism.

But Obama is right there in front of McCain, who has hurt himself badly by pretending not to see him. Both Democrats and Republicans obviously do see him. McCain can dismiss the blacks who take this avoidance as a personal affront — he was never getting their votes. But he has also raised doubts about his own temperament on the world stage. Most Americans seem to be appreciating Obama's grace and calm under this sort of fire. And his lack of campaign stunts.

He didn't try as McCain did to pull an Eisenhower ("I will go to Korea") by announcing he would suspend his campaign and solve the Wall Street-Main Street crisis. McCain, you will recall, wound up doing neither — one reason he moved in the public's mind from "maverick" to "ineffectual maverick."

Then he shot a \$300 billion blank rather than a magic bullet with his mortgage buy-up rescue. Was it money already given to the treasury secretary or new



The moderates are on the march for Obama even if Sarah Palin has stirred up some muddier waters. Labor activists in Milwaukee discussed such results in a roundtable with the New York Times' noted labor reporter, Steven Greenhouse (at laptop).

money? McCain wasn't sure, but it certainly wasn't thought out, and would mainly benefit the creators of the disaster, not the families facing foreclosure.

And meanwhile Obama was also winning debates in the foreign policy arena McCain expected to dominate.

Deceiving Obama has made McCain look deceptive, which raises questions about the main strength he brings to the contest — genuineness built around those years as a Vietnam POW.

Perhaps, as a Rolling Stone profile now intimates, it was McCain himself who revealed to his captors that he was the son of an admiral and got treatment for his horrible wounds, but really, who can blame that instinct to survive? If he succumbed to torture, who doesn't understand? None of that diminishes his personal tale of courage.

But he can't hide deception or miscalculations today by

wrapping himself in yesterday's flag. Obama, to his credit, has not said a word about this, but Republicans sure have.

They are also disturbed — while Democrats mostly just laugh — to see McCain running away from the enemy. In this case that's Bush and Cheney. To pretend he didn't support their programs — to act as if he didn't lead the charge on deregulation and warmongering in Iraq — simply doesn't work.

Beyond that, Obama's analysis of the US financial woes has resonance in both parties — that the stagnant wages of the middle class are a big factor in America's recession and potential depression, as is the growing income gap between rich and poor and the bloated reliance on deregulation in every aspect of society.

(There is a profound irony in the labor community that many in middle and middle-of-

Continued on Page 5

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Labor activists at the state AFL-CIO conference in Milwaukee heard an insightful reminder from special guest speaker Arlene Holt Baker (right), the new executive vice president of the national: Obama's analysis of the economy dovetails with what labor had been saying in vain for years to the Bush administration.

From Page 4

the-road America now nod in agreement with Obama over these issues. So noted the AFL-CIO's new executive vice-president, Arlene Holt Baker, speaking in Milwaukee at the state AFL-CIO convention.

(For years unions complaining about just these things were accused by conservatives and Republicans of creating a "psychological recession," she noted with amusement. "Today they know there was nothing psychological about it.")

McCain's free-fall has helped turn the campaign ugly, as has his choice of Sarah Palin as running mate. Her celebrity status has turned demonstrations overly emotional — it certainly put two hysterics in Waukesha on the national media map, though they weren't as outland-

ish as screamers in middle Florida and southwest Pennsylvania where Obama expected some cultural trouble, and where Palin crowds have hurled invectives at both the media and minorities (shades of macaca)!

But every time Palin speaks she seems to galvanize the more liberal communities around the nation to go to work for Obama.

Labor leaders at the state AFL-CIO gathering at the Wyndham Hotel were actually not unhappy about how Palin was stirring up union Democrats and independents. When you combine the undertone of what she says with her lack of readiness for this job, more of their members were lining up behind Obama because she "took them off the shelf by her attitudes," said one steel-



worker, who made a face when he was reminded that Palin's husband was in his union.

It was an echo of the response a few days earlier at a Milwaukee roundtable with New York Times labor reporter Steven Greenhouse. He was trying to see if racism was at play and if Palin was making a difference in Wisconsin. "Out in the open is better," responded one labor organizer.

Democrats and labor leaders are sheepish about one thing — that Obama was smarter than

they were and rejected their advice. It was Democrats several months ago who were urging Obama to get tougher and nastier to match McCain, pointing out how vulnerable McCain was in his lifelong reliance on financial insiders and lobbyists, his addiction to gambling and desperate schemes, his dubious record on veteran affairs, health care and on, dare we say it, marital stability.

Some of those concerns were relative to the campaign, some were not, but Obama just took on the important ones indirectly in ads and resisted all calls within his own camp to take the debate low road to the high office.

Some think he may still have to get sharp with McCain just in self-defense. In the final weeks many expect McCain to attack in personal terms even Obama can't ignore. But to this point he's proved wiser than many advisers. And he's scoring points with how optimistically he handles

things.

Something more than unflappability has emerged in Obama's approach. Something more than a better organization with more ardent believers.

Obama focuses on issues. What makes him an effective speaker also makes him more cautious and believable in a debate — he thinks before he reacts.

And it is the way he thinks — "more like what leaders do" — that impressed one of those "life-long Republicans" in New York. Added another in the conversation: "No, it's not just that he's more articulate, and it's not because I believe in all his policies. I just trust him to work things through."

Has Dr. King's day finally come? When people are judged not for "the color of their skin but the content of their character"?

"I don't know about that," said the Republican, "but I do know that Obama is far more comfortable in his own skin."



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It's a success of the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership/BIGSTEP, now a United Way partner, but its rebirth requires nurturing and maintenance. Water pipes can burst even as it adds equipment, computers, classrooms and pres-

A United Way to fool a guy

tigious visitors. Another sign of a split personality -- a few times a year it becomes Chez Excellence.

That's the amusing name given by the Milwaukee Area Labor Council when it uses the center as a sort of nightclub -- as it did Sept. 18 for the Labor Kick-off Rally for the United Way community campaign. Led by the AFL-CIO Community Services troops (also associates

of the United Way), the center was converted into a land of balloons, decorations, fancy catering and a cash bar, starting in sunlight and fading to dusk along the gravel terraces outside.

Creeping unnoticed into this, and hiding in the central office, was the Yatchak stealth campaign, an elaborate plot to surprise Christopher Yatchak, who would be the evening's recipient of the prestigious Werner J. Schaefer Labor/United Way Community Service Award.

Yatchak, the retired leader of the Graphics Communications council (who previously was surprised by having a hall named after him in the building his union owns where MALC has its offices, 633 S. Hawley), was lured by a fib from MALC's secretary-treasurer, Sheila Cochran, one of the United Way hosts for the event.

She told him with a straight-face that she was angry that no one had been coming from his GCC Local 577M. Meanwhile MALC vice-president and organizer, Annie Wacker, was secretly sneaking his family into the building. The ruses worked.

Yatchak was stunned to get the honor, find his family there and then be lengthily embarrassed by the tales of all his help to the unfortunate in the union family and in his neighborhood.

Hugged by Cochran, he broke her into laughter by whispering as he received the trophy, "You little stinkers."



TOP FROM LEFT: Daughter Emily, wife Cindy, son Mark and mother Vera popped up at the ceremony to help shock the honoree, Christopher Yatchak.

BELOW: Unions are also heavily involved in the Days of Caring arranged by the United Way to highlight the community's needs. A few days after the event, using scaffolding and dumpsters donated by union companies, workers from four unions tore down the bad roof and put up a new one at a needy retiree's house on S. 70th St. Scott Redman of Plumbers Local 75, the Labor Cabinet co-chair, helped bring in volunteers from four unions - the plumbers, the carpenters, the laborers and the roofers. Helping arrange it all was LeAnn Launstein of Interfaith Older Adult Programs (a United Way partner), who once served as a Milwaukee County Board supervisor.



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Dozens of Wisconsinites – friends, labor people and art patrons – made the trek to Manhattan's Columbus Circle to celebrate the Museum of Arts & Design's new home and inaugural exhibit, featuring Portrait of a Textile Worker (at left). Joining artist

Terese Agnew and her son, Ray, were Mrs. and Mr. Tony Bryant, original patrons at the Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts, and (right) Issa Kohler-Hausmann, Julilly Kohler and Margarete Harvey, all part of the clothing label and funding brigade so essential to the work's existence and global recognition.

Greening the state's roundtables

The green agenda took practical steps for interaction and development this month with grant money to allow community and environmental groups, business, industry, workers and unions, local government and experts to join forces in a series of Sustainability Roundtables through 2009 to advance Wisconsin's green economic development.

The Roundtables are asking all to connect with UW-Extension expertise and leaders in sustainable ideas and technologies,

"This project is an exciting opportunity to bring together many different perspectives," said Corliss Olson of the UW-Extension School for Workers. "Developments in sustainability are taking place all around the state. This project will help build connections among groups that might otherwise be working in isolation from each other."

Many of these groups have similar goals, she noted, but the connections among them have not yet been made. For more information and dates as the program unfolds, contact Olson at 608-265-4923, corliss.olson@uwex.edu



2nd Annual Conference

The Wisconsin LERA Chapter, an organization of labor, management and neutrals involved in labor relations, is sponsoring a One Day Conference in Milwaukee

Speakers Include: Author Linda Gravett, NLRB General Counsel Ronald Meisberg, National LERA President Anthony Oliver

Date: November 13, 2008

Time: Registration 7:30AM
Program 8:30AM

Place: Hyatt Regency Milwaukee
333 W. Wisconsin Avenue

Fees: Members - \$105
Non Members - \$125

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For more information or to request a registration and/or membership form contact:
Suzanne Clement at 414-297-3883 or email suzanne.clement@nlrb.gov

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Here's a county question and a city question

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

Here's why the Milwaukee Area Labor Council is urging a yes vote on the advisory county referendum to add a penny to the local sales tax and another yes vote for an ordinance requiring minimal paid sick days in the city of Milwaukee for the estimated 77,000 private employees who right now don't have any.

These are ideas whose time

has come, particularly in this hard economy caused in large part by neglect.

Sure, it would be nice to think that, when left to their own devices and humanity, the business community and the Milwaukee county executive would push for basic quality of life issues and work as hard as nonprofit groups do to figure out how this can be done. But they haven't.

Maybe it took an economic

disaster of global proportions to realize that.

Now, everyone has pretty much concluded that the time for waiting to correct economic injustices is over. That tax cuts for the wealthy don't trickle down new jobs and better wages. Instead, they helped the obsessive rich play even more games with money. So now we see both the middle class and even the upper middle class crippled by the economic consequences.

There are corollaries of this failed philosophy — and they are being addressed by referendum on Milwaukee's county and city ballots November 4.

Stated simply: Without a hard punch from the voters, the right and just thing for working mothers and sick children won't be done and the dedicated resources for our parks, transit, emergency medical services and the like won't emerge.

And both needs had better be filled in a hurry.

ONE IS ADVISORY

The county referendum is simply advisory to push the state legislature to act and help the county develop rules that make sure the money is used as the voters wish. The referendum asks in sum:

"Shall the State of Wisconsin grant Milwaukee County the authority to provide property tax relief of at least \$67 million by levying 1% county sales to be used to remove the following three items from the property tax levy: parks-recre-

ation-culture, transit and emergency medical services?"

County Executive Scott Walker not only opposed putting this on the ballot and was overruled by the county board. He also opposed the county explaining to the public the purpose of a yes vote, even in neutral language approved by county lawyers. Apparently he'll do anything possible to beat the parks to death so he can privatize them.

The arguments against the sales tax idea are really about the next step in the process, not this one. Once the voters approve, then it will be important to write the law in such a way that the money will

actually go to the services outlined and take the burden off the property tax. Despite Walker's doubts, this can be done.

And without such sort of dedicated relief, Walker will continue to starve the county, forcing citizens to pay more for less quality all in the name of not raising the property tax. Yet this referendum directly shrinks the property tax.

Walker himself provided more reasons for dedicated sales tax funding when he outlined a 2009 budget that would mightily raise transit fees, golf and marina fees, pool and water park fees. Walker's budget would also put parking meters along the lakefront.

Continued on Page 9

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Calendar

For updated master list of events,
visit www.milwaukeeelabor.org

Wednesday, October 29
MALC Executive Council
2 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

Tuesday, November 4
Presidential and General Election
MAKE SURE TO VOTE
Polls Open 7 a.m.

Wednesday, November 5
Monthly Delegate Meeting
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

Wednesday to Saturday, November 12-15
WisCOSH and national COSH conference
Safety issues, workshops, speakers,
to register call WisCOSH (414) 933-2338
Wyndham Hotel, 4747 S. Howell Ave.

Thursday, November 13
Wisconsin LERA Conference
All Day, Hyatt Regency

Wednesday, November 26
MALC Executive Council
2 p.m., 633 S. Hawley Rd.

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- but only one positive answer on ballot!

From Page 8

Worse, by eliminating services or moving them to unnamed private vendors, his budget will ruthlessly cut 339 public service jobs in skilled trades, vehicle maintenance, housekeeping and food services.

Most affected would be AFSCME District Council 48, the county's largest union, already decimated by attacks (the county work force has shrunk 23% under Walker, but do you really think you're paying less and getting the same level of service?). Walker's 2009 cuts would also eliminate half of the skilled trades the county has, noted Lyle Balistreri, president of the Milwaukee Construction & Building Trades Council.

Lee Holloway, who has announced this will be his final term as county board chairman, called the budget the worst in costs and complications that he has seen in his 16 years on the board.

But it sure gave incentive to backers of the one-penny increase in the sales tax, which would require further state and county approval.

Supporters point out that not only does it set funds aside specifically for things like parks and transit, it also would provide the first real relief of the county property tax burden in all the years of Walker's tenure. It would also be a way to get people who don't live in Milwaukee County to pay for county services they often use.

A BINDING ORDINANCE

It was no surprise that the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, along with some stubborn developers and restaurant owners,

needed convincing.

The surprise was John Topp, CEO of the union-connected Allied Construction Employers Association, who apparently scribbled some numbers on the back of an envelope and then worried aloud at a forum about something that he and most businesses also commended as a matter of decency and conscience — providing a minimum of paid sick days to mainly working mothers who otherwise get docked or fired if they take time for their sick children.

9to5 studied the issue, carefully developed a binding ordinance for employees stationed in the city — and then got 42,000 supporting signatures, far more than needed to be put on the city of Milwaukee ballot.

Now you are hearing from the business community the same chorus used to oppose child labor laws or unemployment insurance or worker compensation — this may be the right thing to do, but maybe next year, maybe next century. It's too costly now.

Actually there may be no better time when living wage and family flexibility have become a priority and a solution to economic doldrums. And there may be no better salvation for a city than fair payment and basic benefits for the lowest-income families among us.

Most of the unions Topp works with were quick to tell him they back the idea.

The better paid workers have paid sick days by contracts or simply because the employer wants to keep them around. Even the lowest paid workers often leave when they don't have paid sick days to take care of their

families.

No, no, the opponents say, doing the right thing costs too much. Actually, that's bad or self-deceptive math. Remember you have to work at a company for three months before you can start taking the paid sick days.

When you hear there is a better way than a city ordinance to address these concerns — like maybe a state law or a federal law — you are hearing that this is the right thing that someone else should do. Which is silly.

The business community has had many years to make this easier for small businesses and address a deficit affecting mainly low income workers. The basics of the ordinance are simple and minimal, affecting employees in the city of Milwaukee. After 90 days, workers can start taking one hour of paid sick leave for every 30 hours worked. At that rate it would take most workers eight weeks to earn a full day.

There are also limits on what workers can accumulate in a year — 72 hours max for most. Employees of companies with fewer than 10 workers would get less, up to five sick days, and those working for larger companies would get at most nine days a year. The returns diminish for part-time or temporary workers.

You may also hear that Milwaukee is a test case, that such a law is not common everywhere. Is that bad? Or does Milwaukee prefer to be known for how many bus drivers are beaten on video or how many parks are in disrepair?

Right now, parents face losing a job if a child is sick — or even if a school asks for a coun-

seling meeting. Ellen Bravo, former national director of 9to5 and now a UWM professor, told one MMAC discussion that the only thing “we want to stop with this ordinance is you getting served flu in your soup.”

Or people getting fired because they care about a sick child.

Amy Stear, head of Wisconsin 9to5 who helped promote the ordinance, says Milwaukee should flock to this example of good policy and basic citizenship.

For those who fear businesses will flee to the suburbs to avoid such small numbers of paid sick days, that would be nothing but “lousy publicity for

that suburb.” Attracting better and more devoted workers could actually offset any costs to businesses.

Aimed only at city of Milwaukee voters, the referendum question refers to a simple seven page document (too long for the ballot). It has been endorsed as a yes vote by the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, whose members helped circulate the petition:

“Shall the City of Milwaukee adopt Common Council File 080420, being a substitute ordinance requiring employers within the city to provide paid sick leave to employees?”

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Vote

From Page 1

votes from being xcast.

City election officials, looking at how the attempts to list non-existent voters happened, wondered aloud if the issue wasn't financial need rather than trying to influence the vote.

The community groups, they suggested, had in effect a quota system of registrations a worker must bring in to get paid, which led a few workers to fabricate names, or get friends to sign up, just to get a paycheck. They were quickly caught.

None of this stopped the GOP from accusing ACORN, the people who led the alert, of employing "felons."

Mainly that was an unsavory GOP effort to take advantage of the limitations of the English language. Semantically, anyone convicted of a major crime -- Republican legislator, bribed judge or bank examiner, church gambling addict, voucher-school embezzler, corrupt union official, 18-year old drug abuser - can be

called felon even if they served their time and had their voting rights restored.

Nationally, the rules for restoring full rights to felons who are "off paper" -- completing their debt to society -- are all over the map, which the Republican Party doesn't want to admit at election time.

Maine and Vermont permit felons to vote in prison. Kentucky and Virginia permanently ban felons from voting, which is being challenged in court. Twenty states require a prisoner to complete both parole and probation before voting, which is similar to the process in Wisconsin.

But Wisconsin is also under heavy criticism about inequity, since African Americans comprise only 6% of the overall population but 45% of the corrections population. White or black, almost all prisoners -- many convicted for nonviolent crimes -- will return to society and need jobs and programs of support to overcome stigma and hatred encouraged by such GOP press conferences.

www.866ourvote.org
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(877) 523-2792.

Restoring voter rights is particularly hard on African Americans in Wisconsin - one out of nine remain disenfranchised after prison compared with 1 out of 50 in the broader released population.

There are former felons encouraged to speak in our high schools, to scare students straight or personalize the dangers of drug use. Former prisoners are now trained tradespeople rebuilding City Hall or completing the Marquette Interchange and lakefront condos -- or working in clinics to help the elderly or stem teenage pregnancy.

It struck many observers that there was something deeply un-Christian, and certainly demeaning to society, when Republican Party spokeswoman Kirsten Kukowski called the use of seven felons as voter registration deputies in Milwaukee "simply irresponsible to allow people who have shown a strong lack of judgment in the past to have such an important role in our democratic process."

Irresponsible would better describe the GOP officials who have cried wolf so often about voter fraud. Irresponsible is how city officials regarded this GOP focus on Milwaukee when the biggest danger of vote buying takes place in circumstances of wealth (election protection lawyers won't say what they've uncovered but do say this is one reason they will focus Nov. 4 on such counties as Waukesha and Ozaukee).

Members of both major

political parties have worked to restore released offenders to their home communities, and struggled to help them find counseling and jobs, noted Renee Shavers Crawford, associate director of the ACLU of Wisconsin.

Sen. Russ Feingold (D-Wis) and Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) have introduced the Democracy Restoration Act. If passed, it would allow all felons who've been released from prison to vote in federal elections.

"Facilitating civic participation seems to me a great way for (former prisoners) to begin to take responsibility for their communities again, which will make them less likely to re-offend," Crawford noted.

Some of the complaints being manufactured are described as inventive lawyering, playing any contradictions in state law against local laws against federal laws.

Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, pointing out how aggressively the city is pursuing the reports of voter fraud -- a handful in a sea of more than 300,000 potential city voters -- says any confusion still facing lawyers is a "gripe to be taken up with the state."

Crawford, who it turns out was listening in as was this reporter to the GOP press conference, quietly noted that "it certainly did its part to sow doubts and confusion among the electorate."

She -- along with most of the media -- doesn't see any evidence of the systematic fraud the GOP complained about. And all involved should remember that complaints about "systemic voter fraud" (which didn't exist) led to overblown letters from the GOP

to the likes of Karl Rove -- one reason for subpoenas by Congress into how White House officials used such GOP



"Where are the investive other DAs?" Chisholm asks, in irresponsible and potentially criminal behavior in the firing of 29 US attorneys.

Chisholm has been taking a quiet beating from Democratic officials who think he was naïve to cooperate so quickly with Van Hollen, though Chisholm has made it clear, as has the attorney general, that he had nothing to do with Van Hollen's strange lawsuit against the state.

He actually began this cooperation under a previous attorney general and largely joined the Election Fraud Task Force to let his office take responsibility for the county and to devote respected assistant Bruce J. Landgraf to the effort.

The Van Hollen choice of name -- election fraud rather than voter protection -- was unfortunate and so was the fact that Chisholm was left dangling in the wind when no other county's DA stepped forward to join the task force, furthering the illusion that Milwaukee was the only worry.

"My intention was simply to assure citizens who had any questions that there was a place to go for answers," said Chisholm, "but no question! I agree we should be asking" why the DAs from Waukesha, Dane, Brown and other counties did not step forward to be part of such voter protection. "I'm disappointed they haven't."

Publicizing all the tricks being employed actually puts journalists in a bind. It's easy if you only want to sell newspapers. Just scream fraud in big headlines. It's hard if you believe in public responsibility. How do you make readers or viewers aware of what's going on without making them fear more delays and confrontations at the polls than are likely or possible?

To describe most of the games as rubbish is certainly accurate. But with lawyers well paid to obfuscate and election protection lawyers who have to wait for an excess to happen before they can react, there is no guarantee Snarls may occur for a few people November 4, one reason voters are encouraged to take advantage of absentee ballots, special voting hours and early voting opportunities.

Realistically, particularly in large cities like Milwaukee, go to the polls armed with knowledge of your rights. There are unlikely to be problems, but there is no shame in being prepared.

-- Dominique Paul Noth

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Whose flight is it anyway?

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

Purely by coincidence I was at New York's La Guardia Oct. 1 boarding the very first fake Midwest flight on the home leg back to Milwaukee. Thousands of miles below me across from Mitchell Field, the real original Midwest pilots were protesting the inaugural outsourcing I was flying in.

Oh, the plane was real and well handled, perfectly safe and even on time --- an Embraer 170 jet, two seats on each side of the narrower aisle. But the seats and the plane were smaller, not the "signature wide seats" of the Boeing 717s that regular passengers anticipate.

The repainted exterior branded this a Midwest plane, but the pocket in front of my seat had a Republic Airways brochure to explain the plane's exits.

The Midwest pilots from ALPA and the flight attendants from AFA, many of whom I know, were the crew on the way out to New York -- but on this flight they were quietly being cloned by very capable Teamsters pilots and flight attendants (who underbaked the cookies on this maiden voyage, but hey, I'm sure they now have the hang of it).

If you talked to these Teamsters brethren away from the plane, you'd find them keenly aware and unhappy to be played as pawns in a management game by Midwest (with, they suspect, the aide of Republic, not to mention Northwest and Delta working on the sidelines).

Midwest, after cutting or

furloughing 75% of its pilots and flight attendants, said they can come back and learn to handle the Embraer 170s over eight months to a year. What Midwest hasn't spelled out to the media is that the crews can come back only if they accept the unconscionable wage and benefit cuts Midwest insists on.

"In the old West, they knew it was blackmail," laughed Greg Uselmann, the longtime pilot delegate to the Milwaukee labor council who is about to be furloughed despite decades with the company.

Midwest is on record seeking pay cuts from 45% to 65% for the pilots and 34% to 56% for the flight attendants -- even after decimating their membership with its existing and continuing cuts. From 400 Midwest pilots at the start of the year, ALPA is down to about 119. The flight attendants have already lost 317. Many lived, shopped and owned homes in the Milwaukee area. Midwest can now take some pride in almost single-handedly keeping Milwaukee on the national pace for foreclosures.

It has certainly forced hundreds of trained employees to look for new professions.

Jay Schnedorf, chairman of the bargaining team for the Midwest ALPA pilots, argues that Midwest's deal with Republic violates its existing labor agreement, an issue that may take months to settle.

For the flight attendants, the hypocrisy melting point came a few days later at Discovery World when they discovered that

Midwest CEO Timothy Hoeksma, who had just dumped 75% of his workers, was to keynote the annual Wisconsin 75 business breakfast hosted by Deloitte and the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

"Kind of makes you wonder what he has to teach them," commented one flight attendant, echoing the later remarks in front of media cameras by Toni Higgins, president of the Midwest AFA unit. Dozens of union members joined the protest while the flight attendants cornered and confronted Hoeksma several times, asking what on earth he could tell other Milwaukee businesses about CEO values.

What Hoeksma said was he had to outsource these popular routes, planes and workers because Republic Airways was giving a \$10 million loan as part of a 10-year lease for the 12 Embraers -- with another \$10-15 million loan if Midwest meets certain financial hurdles. In the airline industry, these are not long-term solutions but Band-Aids for executives.

And if you want a further slap in the face as CEOs everywhere prove they didn't know



Letting no corporate number go unscrutinized are the Midwest flight attendants' bargaining leaders. From left, Cat Reed, Toni Higgins and Joey Krajewski.

what was about to hit them, Midwest now ignores the original reason it argued for so radical a downsizing -- cutting 1,850 jobs this year out of an original force of 3,380. That reason was the jump in fuel costs to \$140 a barrel.

But those prices have dropped nearly in half.

Perhaps Midwest can join the rest of the financiers by saying none of this is the fault of its executives. Perhaps Midwest can argue that it is just one of the many companies caught with overextended inventory and the need to slash and burn, like Starbucks and Target looking to close stores, like Ford looking to

cut back dealerships while GM and Chrysler talk merger.

But oops! Midwest's inventory included routes it flew. Virtually all of those were snapped up by other companies that think they can make money and take advantage of lower fuel prices.

No wonder some flight attendants and pilots are convinced that Midwest is not telling the real story. And they will not go quietly into the night. Look for a sudden series of rallies and protests aimed at Midwest's biggest corporate clients and business travelers, while the fight continues in court.

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