



GET THOSE VEHICLES LINED UP! Willie Ellis organizes the setup at Zeidler Park. Other photos: Colorful costumes abound and thrown candy sends spectators scrambling - explore Laborfest Pages 6-8.



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(USPS 350-360)

## That durned elusive voter bill going to court

By Dominique Paul Noth, Editor, Labor Press

It's most accurately known as the voter suppression law, but in routine media and legislative parlance it's described as the voter ID law. Under any name, in the next few months it will face a battery of lawsuits on a number of fronts arguing in federal and state courts that it disenfranchises voters, skirts voter rights language embedded in constitutional law or has been revealed by bureaucrats as a farce regulation costing taxpayers millions of dollars and causing citizens useless delays and frustrations at the polls and in the tally counting aftermath.

The normal judicial expectation of careful review seems corrupted at the state's current highest court, and federal courts always move slowly (and perhaps more slowly now so as not to be linked in the public mind with the dysfunctional state court). So the new voter confusion law may survive for a while.

That's why a number of groups are exploring ways to educate threatened classes of voters and prepare them to deal with the new landscape. That means helping citizens in jeopardy of losing their vote -- from students relying on currently inadequate college IDs to the elderly born at home in states like Mississippi. It includes developing money for research and expertise - and getting it all done by April.

The law goes into effect in the 2012 presidential primary, which has now been set on the same day as the widespread nonpartisan April election.

The lawsuits - and more seem on the way - will challenge different aspects of the law, according to the legal experts we've talked to. The challenges are likely to mystify the uninformed public almost as much as the new voter law has, and it is unlikely the media is prepared or willing to provide simple clarification.

For instance, news sources keep saying the legislation was created to prevent voter fraud, without detailing that it only addresses a form of fraud for which there is no credible evidence -- in-person false voters. In other words, we're spending millions to attack something that doesn't exist, and are forced to rely on explanation from a media that has made a living for years screaming at readers and viewers about minor or unproven voter fraud of a much different variety.

For the public that never swallowed this bilge, there has been a more believable argument. The media has played up how it just seems "sensible" to require a photo ID of the state variety for anyone who wants to vote (with a few wrinkles to allow a few other IDs that previously required presenting proof, such as US passports, naturalization papers and the like.)

That appeals to the comfortable who think driver's license style photo IDs and supportive proofs of birth or citizenship are a slam

**Voter Bill** continued Page 10

## Is US ready for a wave of progressive women?

By Dominique Paul Noth  
Editor, Labor Press

News events seem to have caught up with the speculation I raised in the August Labor Press and in online stories. Has the time truly arrived for the widespread emergence of progressive women in politics?

Lots of political savvy Democrats seem to think so.

US Rep. Tammy Baldwin, one of the US House's busiest liberals with a clear vision of public service, is running to replace Herb Kohl in the US Senate, the only announced Democrat. Meanwhile, the state GOP is scuffling about whether Tommy Thompson has swung far enough into the trees to at least try to woo the Tea Party or whether Mark Neumann has swung so far into the extreme right-wing branches that he can no longer win the center. (Does anyone remember how in the primary for governor, Neumann

### Brought before the bar



Page 3: Find out why Sheila Cochran was surprised when judges and lawyers summoned her for a prestigious luncheon.



Rep. Tammy Baldwin, the only announced Democrat running for Herb Kohl's senate seat, visited with parade participants.

accused Scott Walker of not being conservative enough?)

In Massachusetts, where the senate seat has seesawed from Kennedy to Brown while the governor's mansion has similarly whipsawed from Romney to Patrick, a champion of consumer protection, Elizabeth Warren (probably the current national definition of brainy progressive woman) has announced a senate campaign -- and this Warren type trend toward outspoken believable -- and intelligent -- females is popping up in other states.

Wisconsin's replacement elections mainly dumped men or are empowering a heady share of women to move against Walker supporters -- and some of those Walker acolytes have further put their seats in jeopardy by trying to run for other offices on his coattails or isolating their seats by seeking to serve in his administration. On top of that, as things are shaping up, many of the April nonpartisan races for judicial, county, municipal offices will feature female candidates claiming to make a difference.

Joanne Kloppenburg - the balanced, thoughtful assistant

attorney general under several administrations who came out of nowhere to end within a few thousand votes of David Prosser for the Wisconsin Supreme Court (in an "Oh, look! We just found 14,000 votes" story that continues to stain Waukesha County's reputation) -- has announced she will run for a vacancy on the District 4 Appeals Court. The state is divided into four appeals districts and this is one of the most influential -- anchored in Dane County and other south and west regions where Kloppenburg won handily over Prosser.

Whether Kloppenburg is progressive (she has never telegraphed her partisan leanings as Prosser has), her candidacy reflects the sort of reasoned even-tempered woman open to argument that many candidates in judicial contests around the state will now be required to reassure voters about.

But really, has the time come for progressive women? You'll get an argument in traditional media and even on suburban streets. Only partly supported by national polls but cer-

**Women** continued Page

# Legislators seek to restore recycling cuts

When Gov. Walker originally released his biennial budget, he eliminated the requirement that local governments operate recycling programs, which has been law in Wisconsin for over two decades. That move also created fury throughout state governments on all sides of the

political debate. Walker also raided the recycling fund and gave the money to the new Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation.

The stormy budget debate that followed saw clear bipartisan support for recycling and ultimately even his GOP supporters saw this as a bridge too

far, so the recycling requirement was reinstated. But Walker got a bone -- Republicans raided \$26 million from the fund. Now state legislators led by Rep. Mark Pocan and Sen. Chris Larson, both Democrats, have introduced a bill to change that.

Though Walker's plan to eliminate funding for recycling was rejected, "this reduced funding will still result in major cuts to services or higher fees for citizens," said Amber Meyer Smith, director of government relations for Clean Wisconsin, the state's oldest and largest group dedicated to protecting the environment

The group is endorsing the bill. "As legislators shift to focus on ideas with bipartisan support, there is no better place to start than the popular recycling fund," Smith said as the sponsors sought to gather bipartisan legislative support for the Recycling Fund Restoration Act, which would direct \$26 million in additional funds to the recycling fund -- exactly what was cut from the fund.

"When we weaken recycling programs by raiding their funding, what does that say to families trying to teach their kids about protecting the environment?" asked bill sponsor Pocan.



Chris Abele, the Milwaukee County executive at right whose call for more progressive women in public affairs is discussed on Page 3, also showed up at Zeidler Park's WMCS radio setup before Laborfest. He's shown chatting with WRTP leader Earl Buford and Eyon Biddle (center), the county supervisor who has stated that Abele's campaign pledge not to touch taxes makes him a "Walker-Lite" by expecting the county board to take the blame.

## Trapshooting

After twenty weeks of shooting in the Milwaukee Area Labor Council league, the results are in. We welcomed three new teams this year, Team Steam, Blind Men and No Shorts, and would like to see more next year. The captains' meeting will be at the Hunter's Nest in Muskego at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 23, 2012.

The electricians' teams swept the results as reflected in wins, losses and ties:

- CWA Local 4603.....11-9-0
- 3. Blind..... 10-8-1
- 4. Blind Men
- CWA Local 4603..... 6-12-2
- Class B W-L-T**
- 1. High Voltage
- IBEW 494.....15-5-0
- 2. No Shorts
- IBEW 494.....9-10-1
- 3. Blind.....8-10-2
- 4. Team Steam
- Plumbers Local 75.....6-13-1

### Class AA W-L-T

- 1. 6 Volts to Lightning
- IBEW 494-1..... 14-2-4
- 2. Blind.....10-6-4
- 3. Pipe Dopes
- Plumbers Local 75.....6-11-3
- 4. Pipers
- Plumbers Local 75..... 3-14-3

### Class A W-L-T

- 1. Wirenuts
- IBEW 494-2.....11-8-1
- 2. Lucky 13

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# Lifelong fight for equal justice honored

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

Surveying the Legal Aid Society luncheon of some 600 at the Italian Community Center September 8, awards recipient Sheila Cochran joked that she never expected to face so many judges and lawyers "to receive an honor . . . when I was so willing -- and remain willing -- to face you under other circumstances."

The comment by the long-time chief operating officer of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council evoked much laughter. But loud applause also greeted her fiery defense of collective bargaining and opposition to the attack on unions by Gov. Walker's policies.

At least from two-thirds of the crowded ballroom.

One of the invited guests, Assembly minority leader Peter Barca, wondered about those few tables that seemed to sit on their hands during Cochran's promise that unions were not going away, and also seemed to have trouble breaking out in applause when collective bargaining was defended by the keynote speaker, Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele. Of course, those tables represented the law firms that support the pro-bono concept but have found more lucra-



Sharing thoughts after the Legal Aid Society luncheon were the three equal justice awards honorees. From left: Kit McNally, Sister Ann Halloran and Sheila Cochran.

tive work providing counsel to the governor and his well-heeled corporate backers.

This luncheon is the annual awards function of the Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee, famous for its volunteer assistance by lawyers to fulfill the mission of equal justice for the poor, providing ethical balance for the legal community regardless of income.

Its veteran leader, Tom Cannon, who recently published a notable book on the society's effective nonprofit history, served as emcee. One of the invited speakers, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, started the

lunch on an amusing note with an anecdote about a pro-bono lawyer being reminded by another lawyer that it was "anti-bono" efforts that made volunteerism so necessary.

But as Abele noted, it was hardly coincidence that the three recipients of this year's Equal Justice Award -- which the society's leader created in 2007 to honor exemplary citizens in the fight for justice -- were all women.

His remark about the award winners actually set the tone for Abele's speech, which focused on how the values of progressive women were desperately needed

in today's public service.

Cochran was cited not just for the labor council's partnership with the society in collecting 1,000 pieces of luggage for the foster children in the inner city (an effort that she made a point of acknowledging came from AFL-CIO field liaison Jay Reinke, who was present) but for her active role in the fight against the elimination of bargaining rights for public employees as well as emerging as one of "the state's foremost advocates for economic and social justice in the workplace."

The other honorees were recent retirees with tireless reputations of their own - though Cochran, who isn't going anywhere, celebrated a (60 or something) birthday that week.

Sister Ann Halloran had served as executive director of the Dominican Center for Women focusing on programs for the Amani neighborhood on the North Side, one of Milwaukee's poorest. But she has fought poverty with education, low-cost housing, attacks on the devastating foreclosure crisis (in a coalition with the society) and other programs that have built families and jobs.

Also honored was Kit Murphy McNally, just retired executive director of the commu-


nitywide influential Benedict Center, which has changed the face of Milwaukee justice with an 85% success rate in avoiding recidivism among male and female lawbreakers.

But McNally has also changed the thinking and even definition of lawbreaker for many of the judges and lawyers honoring her in that ballroom. Nonviolent offenders have been rescued by her tireless championing of alternative programs, drug and alcohol counseling and steps other than incarceration for first-time female offenders.


In their remarks, the honorees revealed themselves as a mutual admiration society, humbled to be recognized in such fast company.

But Cochran in her comments suggested to great applause adding another member to the fast company as a pioneer woman for justice. And her choice was actually on the podium to promote an informational push by her court system for the Civil Gideon movement, which professional legal organizations are backing to expand publicly-provided legal counsel in civil cases for low-income people.

That champion for justice singled out is Shirley Abahamson, the chief justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court.



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# Women

From Page 1

tainly thumped upon by big money right-wing media, the political outlook is that the nation is far too conservative for a wave of progressive (usually liberal Democrat) women to succeed in being elected to major public office.

On the other side are forward-looking thinkers who have noted how much America is changing and how more national polls reflect profound movement across the political spectrum. Sexual orientation or religious affiliation -- or lack of either -- is not an issue for many voters under 30, and for a growing number of older voters no longer buffaloed by old myths and views of what matters in public service. That's a backlash against constantly proclaiming morality by politicians who seem to behave quite differently behind closed doors.

Still, let's not pretend. The 2010 vote was clearly reactionary old school not progressive in the liberal sense of the term, and if things are changing, in the summer of 2011, the Wisconsin electorate in GOP districts demonstrated hardly all the way.

But nationally as well as locally, the body electorate does seem to be changing. This may be a natural reaction to the reluctance of congressional

Republicans to do anything to help the country if it might also help Obama. A lot of voters have had it with these old ways and obstinacy.

Within the state, you can credit Gov. Walker's excessive attack on basic family rights as too obvious a political catering to the tired policies of his richest supporters, many living out of state.

But however you read the causations, whether you think the timing is too early for progressive or just ripe, much of the gains have come from relying on women.

Note how the national press of all political persuasions looked at the recall election results in August and now talks about parity between conservative and liberal at the polls, where once they saw only red. Many such media stories are about activated women, unheralded and often unknown women, as a key to social advancement.

The chauvinist extremism paralyzing the nation -- and we are not just talking about men but about the ugliest, bigoted, over-the-top religiosity side of partisanship -- might not have happened except for the paucity of brainy, compassionate women in public office. That may well be holding the nation back from new ways of looking at issues, empathizing with everyday prob-

lems and talking about fresh solutions in public chambers.

Barbara Lawton, the former Wisconsin lieutenant governor, takes both political parties to task for making women's reproductive health the first slash in balancing budgets at both the state and federal level.

US Rep. Barbara Lee and other members of Progressive Congress touring America lamented our historic dependence on war and physical conflict to solve political disputes and spoke of how women felt helpless in the face of this tendency toward violence that destroyed their families.

Men as well as women complain aloud that the dead hands and old habits of power, control and philosophy dominate the national debate.

At a time when more businesses are turning to women leaders to promote sales and innovation, their historic attitudes that women are worth less than men have come back to slap them down. If businesses better valued women as employees and customers, many gurus of Wall Street now say, perhaps we could shake off these economic doldrums and create more value rather than frills in the nation's products. When you look at how the consumer has been treated, and how many are women, the simply transparency advocated

by Warren and blocked by tired old GOP carries quite a weight.

It needs to be reemphasized that the Tea Party influence may have set the cause of women back in 2010, though the media continues to be fascinated by the Tweeter women at the top of the pile.

All that coverage makes it seem that women are more prominent in public office, but a lot of established and forward-moving public servants were displaced in 2010 - in fact, there are fewer women in influential policy positions than before, even in state houses, where the presence of Tea Party elected females has to be balanced against their submissive catering to the creaky ideas and lobby-happy habits of male right-wingers.

Women may have voted less for Democrats in 2010 but they hardly replaced them with women. In fact, despite the toxicity of how females view the current Congress, their votes actually increased the number of men -- many political veterans, many insiders eager to play the hoary games both in D.C. and in statehouses.

The times have changed in a few short months, as many articles and politicians point out. The keynote speaker at Milwaukee's Legal Aid Society ceremonies September 8, Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele, noted it was hardly coincidence that the three honorees for the equal justice award were women - Dominican Sister Ann Halloran, Benedict Center innovator Kit McNally and labor council CFO Sheila Cochran. And much of his following speech was devoted to the need for more progressive women in public office.

See related story Page 3.

Recall for a moment the 1960s - an era that the right-wing still demeans because of the advance of civil rights, peace movements, Medicare and, gasp, feminism. Today more college graduates and Ph. Ds are women. They are also nearly half the workforce and more of the adult population. Yet parity in public office is still absent, in horrifying proportions.

The statistics confirm the push for progressive women in public office is long overdue - and under the tireless promotion of leader Karen Middleton, her organization profiled last month, Emerge America. pumps its solution that these should be women tied to the progressive wing of the Democratic Party.

What some once saw as a sliver movement in the need to get more women running, Emerge America and its state chapters seem the Rosetta Stone of success -



Jessica King putting potential candidates through their paces and preparation in how to understand policies, talk about issues, use the Democratic principles, network with men and women, raise money and dig deep into the grassroots. (In fact, one new state senator, Jessica King, is actually an Emerge Wisconsin graduate.)

The fact that progressive women are a hot topic for male political leaders such as Abele, the reality of these statistics, the gains across the nation, reflect that the dream is turning into a genuine mission.

And something of a nightmare for the Republican Party.

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# What Laborfest was vs what was written

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

There was thankfully one clear fact in Journal Sentinel's primary coverage of Laborfest. Not the name of the annual celebration, which the story botched. Certainly not accuracy about the main sponsor. But at least it was right that the attendance on 2011 Labor Day was "smaller" than President Obama's appearance last year. Assuredly in terms of size of crowd at the historic Labor Day celebration stretching back 46 years, 2011 was second in size at Summerfest (Maier Festival Park)

This time it was more children and families, Bingo players, vintage car enthusiasts and the like roaming freely at the free afternoon festival the unions pay for. Quite busy was the supervised children's area and playgrounds.

It was back to normal in a way, once you took away the security issues involved in the president's appearance in 2010. The flow was calmer, the food lines steady even if the crowd was understandably thousands smaller. (Still more than 4,000 by an eye estimate.)

The 11 a.m. parade to the party was a different story. It seemed smaller at the start but turned out huge as latecomers showed up, many not staying for the after-parade party

The Downtown parade was more than an hour long. Many units were larger than last year in union participants, with private sector unions and trades leading the way in volume and the inevitable and constantly inventive anti-Walker chants and signs. There were lots of trucks, cranes and flatbeds but with



Along the route: the blue fist and cheering spectators. **More photos Page6-7.**

number limits imposed by the organizers, who actually turned away mechanized offerings that wanted to share the parade with the giant papier-mâché blue fist pulled by a tractor right after the Harley motorcycles and vintage cars flashed by.

This parade typically has participants rather than spectators but this year there were literally hundreds in clusters along the route cheering the workers -- more than I have seen in a decade -- to lend support, most waiting just outside the Summerfest grounds so they could stroll in afterward to enjoy the dance music and more.

Other large parade contingents included AFT and the public school teachers - and assuredly there were always anti-Walker cadences and the presence of recall Walker marchers and signup centers. But preceding at Zeidler Park and followed at Maier Festival Park was a family oriented, politically comfortable party -- and that aspect, while larger than the politics, was barely covered by the local media, which understandably

was more interested in inflaming the partisanship than exploring the family side of the labor community.

The huge blue fist that was a centerpiece of the parade was parked on the grounds, to be sure, but largely an ornament barely noticed by the visitors. The puppet people -- Milwaukee Public Theatre which gathers artists, musicians, mask makers, dancers and was invited into the parade years ago by the sponsoring Milwaukee Area Labor

Council because of compatible themes about the environment and social justice - had been assured by the media that it would only interview the puppeting participants at the gathering place, but instead Fox News and others sent microphoned reporters and video cameras around Zeidler Park to gather quotes about Walker's policies from locals private and public.

That media behavior was largely unknown to the usually mild-mannered leader of the

Milwaukee Public Theatre, Barbara Leigh, who later offered a mystified and mortified apology when Journal Sentinel labeled this longtime workers parade as "officially the All City Peoples Parade" -- something never suggested previously by Leigh, chief Laborfest organizer Sheila Cochran or even previous coverage by JS staff with a sense of history.

The boner - clearly caused by sending the unprepared to gin up the political issues -- was pointed out to JS by the Labor Press and brought promises from both publisher and operating editor to retract that statement in the newspaper. (Online, all that happened is that the erroneous sentence was dropped, so only readers of the first version knew of the mistake). But it still took JS two correction tries in print to get it right, something of a metaphor to how it generally fumbles covering unions' involvement in the community.



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**START AND END** -- Parade marshal Tony Rainey and Spider George leader on the Miller Stage, George Busateri.



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The signs and banners are largely self-explanatory around the photo horn, but that is AFT Local 212's throng below, and the MASH entertainment unit (bottom) playing music on a flatbed.



Even break-dancers cavorted in the People's Parade invited by the labor council to join the Laborfest parade.



Milwaukee's teachers turned out in force, the Bloomingdale family (she's now with state AFL-CIO) joined Candice Owley and the nurses (left), SEIU (below) brought a large identig to the boisterous, busy Laborfest parade. The signs identify most units, with private unions actually outnumbering the public sector, led off (bottom) by AFSCME District Council 48.



Laborfest photos by Labor Press editor Dominique Paul Noth, AFT Local 212's Sue Ruggles, and visiting photographer Richard Nemish. Ruggles' comprehensive amazing photo album of Laborfest is available online at [www.flickr.com/photos/44933821@N04/sets/72157627549232625/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/44933821@N04/sets/72157627549232625/)





## Raffles surprise, reward

**Figuratively**, Terry Bellinger (left) leaped from a county transit bus to a Harley Davidson Street Glide (below left). He did it by buying two raffle tickets from a fellow member of ATU Local 998 – and then his name was announced as the big prize winner in the Laborfest raffle. Since he doesn't ride a motorcycle, Bellinger intends to sell the 2012 bike, quite a return for \$10 in tickets.

**Another big return** was enjoyed by J. Saenz, the \$500 cash prize winner. And the eight winners of \$100: Ron Grabowski, Adam Busalacchi, Peggy Thrasher, Terry Dabb, Jim Jenison, Janis Borchardt, Cheryl Medina and Joel G. Lazer.

**There were also winners** of the free adult raffles (not requiring ticket purchases). The prizes and the winners were Marcus Entertainment Card - Louise Turzinski; Chop House gift card - Louis O'Neal, and one night stay at the downtown Hilton - Don Zysk. Winners of the children's raffle and their prizes were not available at press time.



### FROM NY TO PARADE TO MONUMENT

**Pulled in the parade** by town of Lisbon workers and fire truck was a gouged eight-foot portion of an I-beam from "Ground Zero" – the Twin Towers site in New York City destroyed 10 years ago on 9/11. The same "We Will Never Forget" motto decorates the beam's final resting place, along with 10-foot steel replicas of the twin towers. The Sunday after the parade, while a large piece of wreckage from the 9/11 site was being ceremonially unveiled as a tribute at the War Memorial Center, this separate I-beam was set stationary as its own special tribute monument at the park area next to the Lisbon town hall at W234 N 8676 Woodside Dr.

**The setting work** was carried out by Willie Earl Roundtree (right below), a longtime employee of the Doral Corp. and a member the Iron Workers Local 8 of Milwaukee for 33 years. The beam work was further assisted by a crane operator from Operating Engineers Local 139, Larry Kramer of Dawes Crane & Rigging, and by Charlie Lomas (left in photo), the project manager at Doral, along with help from Justin Sayre, C.J. Lomas and Andy House. The plaques and wall mounts in the park monument were designed by the president of Zeman Tool & Die, James J. Lomas.

## Calendar

Visit [www.milwaukeealabor.org](http://www.milwaukeealabor.org) for updated events

### Wednesday, October 5

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

### Thursday, October 13

**United Way Labor Kickoff Rally**  
Invitational program, appetizers, 6:30 p.m.,  
Center of Excellence, 3841 W. Wisconsin Ave

### Wednesday, October 26

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

### Wednesday, November 2

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

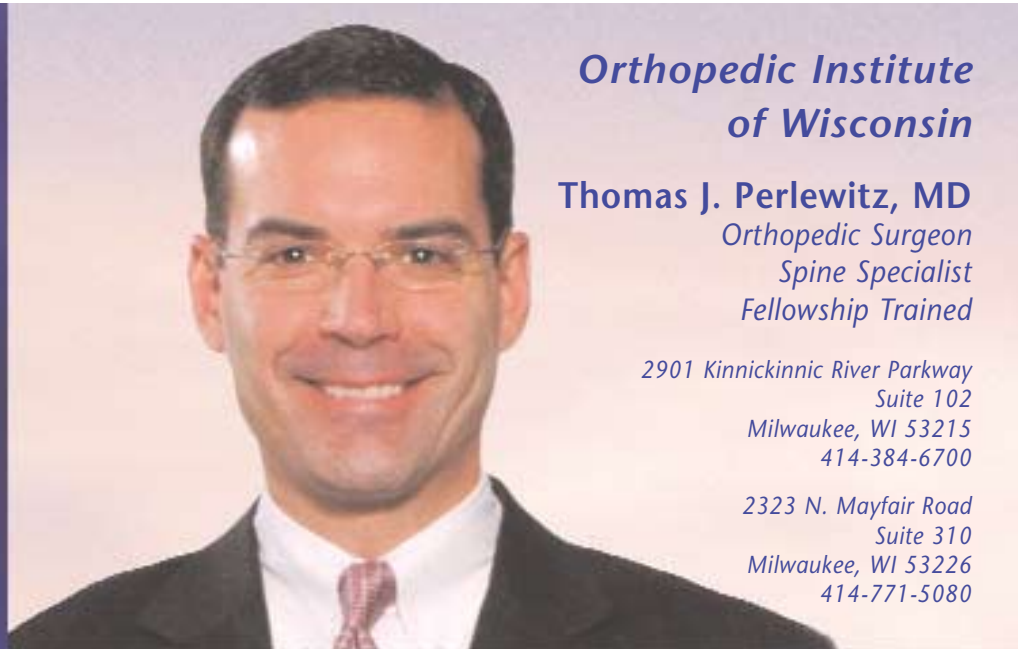
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# MPS pushes for truth on property tax bill

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

The Milwaukee Public Schools board is requesting another group of elected officials, the leaders of the city of Milwaukee, to engage in a flagrant act of truth in advertising and transparency in government.

They are asking for city property tax payers to be told that 17% of what they think they are paying to MPS is never seen by MPS and is actually filling the gaping financial hole the state -- with all its revenue streams -- left in the private school voucher program.

MPS supporters of the idea emphasize that it's not a case of raising taxes but telling the public where their tax dollars go.

It has long been the purpose of the end of the year tax bill -- which includes an informational brochure -- to allow anyone who owns property in Milwaukee to compare tax rates per \$1,000 of assessed value levied by every unit of government involved.

The bill also lists the citywide tax levies (before tax credits) by governmental unit, which last year put MPS first, followed by the city, the county, the tech college (MATC) and the sewerage district (MMSD). That's supposed to be truth in advertising.

Wait until the largest property holders and the smallest house owner discover the reality most simply don't know. An accurate lineup in 2010 would have reflected city first, dropping MPS to second by taking away more than \$50 million, with the county third and then MATC neck and neck with the new transparency component, the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP). Sewerage would lag far behind.

In a few months, given Gov. Walker's changes and the last-minute manipulations of the legislature's joint finance committee, MPCP will likely grow to a \$53.4 million burden on Milwaukee property tax payers and could replace MATC as No. 4 on that list. It assuredly will in 2012. And a simple transparency change would drop the citywide MPS levy in the taxpayer's eyes to truth in advertising -- about \$240 million on the 2011 property tax, rather than more than \$293 million. That's not small change, and psychologically quite different.

The elected officials in charge of accepting the MPS request for basic clarification are both retiring in April and have made their mark in fiscal responsibility, pushing convenience and service for the public. They are city treasurer Wayne Whittow and comptroller Walter Morics. Both could leave office with another laurel of accuracy and transparency by honoring the MPS board's request. If they ask



MPS board members Jeff Spence (left) and Larry Miller (center) ask for transparency on city tax bills as the schools' legislative policy manager Chris Thiel (right) prepares to testify.

around, as Labor Press did, they will find the mayor as well as civic leaders favorable.

Since state aid covers only about 62% of the voucher tuitions, the city property tax payer picks up 38% of the cost of every voucher school student (works out to about \$2,448 per pupil).

But all this has been long hidden from property tax payers, who only see MPS on the tax bill and thus hold the public school system accountable for money it never touched that is going to private schools.

In truth, these taxpayers are billed not only for the largest school district in the state but levied for the sixth largest, which is what the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program has grown to in the city, noted MPS board chairman Michael Bonds at a special meeting in September.

MPS should be entitled to that \$50 million plus since it's the count of MPS kids that provides the rationale. The state sends the money to private schools in the name of voucher school parents. So MPS never gets even a breath of it except for being listed on the tax bill as the recipient and spender of 17% it never gets,

Why, under the convoluted equalization aid formula employed by the state, are voucher kids invisible? To make Milwaukee seem wealthier and let other school districts where Republicans rule the legislature get a healthier slice of the state pie. No surprise, then, that the erasing of some 20,000 living, breathing children out of the equalization formula doesn't publicly dismay the other school districts benefiting.

Even when forced to concede the irrationality, the state has refused to repair the blatant flaw despite the urgent request of such officials as Mayor Tom Barrett. Now the MPS is asking for transparency on the bill so at least the public knows what it's paying for and what MPS is not getting but is still blamed for.

The larger issue is not pro or con voucher schools. Some think they are good for education, though a detailed, carefully bal-

anced University of Arkansas study reveals that MPS does better than most voucher schools and in sum as well as the best even after a decade. No wonder a large percentage of voucher families move their children back to MPS schools after being subjected to the choice program. (The movement back and forth further hurts MPS, since voucher schools get the tax money even as the kids leave and MPS often has to wait nearly a year to count the children in the funding formula.)

The University of Arkansas report criticizes the funding mechanism as an uneven double

whammy with an adverse impact of some \$47 million on Milwaukee property tax payers. (If only they knew, but who reads studies?) It offers options of how the state could avoid this double dip.

If you carefully examine what the president of School Choice Wisconsin, Jim Bender, told Journal Sentinel Sept. 13 in response to the MPS call for accuracy, even voucher advocates inadvertently admit it would be more honest to make the money they get a separate item on the tax bill.

The reasons for transparency are more urgent than when a "voucher tax" line was broached four years ago. Gov. Walker has not only expanded the private school tuition support to Racine County (Green Bay successfully resisted the move). In Milwaukee he also eliminated all caps on the number of students that could go into voucher schools and raised the income eligibility well past the originally targeted low income families. Now a family of four earning \$72,000 can participate. He also opened the voucher doors to any school in the state.

Already nine schools outside the city are on board -- some as far away as Cedarburg and Columbus, most religious schools, some even boarding

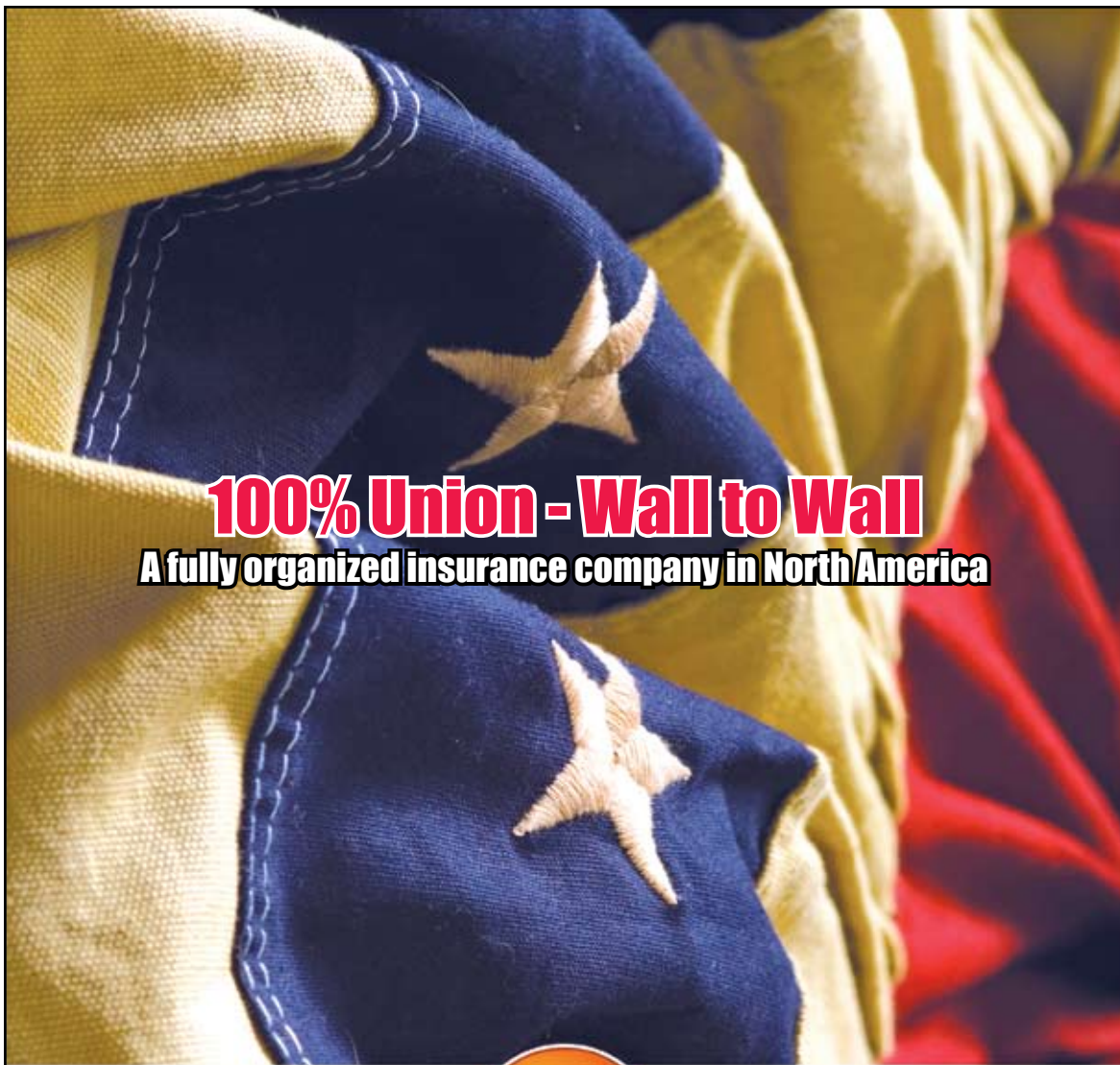
schools. Now they can take city of Milwaukee children with voucher money.

One irony: private school K-12 enrollment is falling in school districts all over the state -- except in Milwaukee, where the voucher program is keeping a lot of private schools alive. Perhaps Walker is seeking to rescue the private school movement by using city of Milwaukee property tax payers as his bank.

Once you could have argued that underwriting private school tuition was aimed at giving choice to poor children always heading to MPS. Walker's expansion means paying for children always headed to private schools.

If the tuition at St. Thomas More High School in St. Francis is \$8,200 a year (so listed), there are middle class families that can now get in just paying the \$1,758 left over after the state underwriting. If Wayland, the coed boarding academy run by 7th Day Adventists in Columbus, costs \$12,000 in tuition, not so for a qualifying city kid.

And if city voucher kids wind up providing a steady stream of tax-funded income to these suburban schools, imagine how those schools could play with tuition costs for suburban children.



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# Voter Bill

From Page 1

dunk because their lifestyle zone is limited to people who possess such goods, ignoring the thousands of Wisconsin voters who don't have similar backgrounds, means, circumstances or conditions.

To the naked eyes of families who know the hardships involved -- for the disabled who never drove, for those who have lost all their identification through tragedy or poverty, for the elderly or refugees whose records if any are distant dim memories -- the bill is simply an effort by the GOP majority to make it difficult for

categories of voters they think will vote for Democrats, disenfranchising rural, minority, elderly, student and other clusters.

Obvious this may be, but what makes it hard to prove in court is how the morally unconscionable may be legally permissible. The legislature and Gov. Walker used squads of lawyers to fashion this serpent and modeled much of the bill after political gimmicks from other squads of lawyers working for ALEC, the right-wing American Legislative Exchange Council.

Yet after all that work - several lawyers on both sides told me - the bill's creators may have overthought the legal wrinkles they employed, which may expose their real motives to

thoughtful judges presented with accurate evidence.

Moreover, the ALEC forces can't control the ongoing excess, zeal, even gloating of some of the conservative bureaucrats interpreting this confusing law -- confusing even to legal experts in the field. Such crass behavior has also opened up the voter bill to more court challenges.

And this time they are facing some thoughtful opposition, lawyers who have learned lessons from past rulings. For instance, the GOP majority sought to emulate a photo ID voter bill ruled legal a few years ago in Indiana, but the Wisconsin lawmakers neglected the care taken in that state to address suppression concerns, provide enough DMVs, etc.

That appearance of care for the disenfranchised brought a cautious US Supreme Court decision that Indiana was OK because very few voters were harmed, though new university level research suggests that the justices just weren't shown the full extent of disenfranchisement.

Wisconsin lawyering wants to avoid that oversight. They are also aided by the growing evidence of a more obvious effort by Walker's legions to suppress certain voters, to impose what many regard as an illegal poll tax on the right to vote and to circumvent little known elements of the state constitution. So the calls for injunctive relief are likely to come in sections and only after research and convincing evidence in the form of aggrieved citizens.

The ACLU wants to talk to voters from across the state who are having serious problems getting an ID (or the underlying documents they need to get an ID).



While not specifically about the voter bill pushed through by Walker, this popular banner and motto during Laborfest, here carried by members of AFT Local 212, assuredly reflects the message of the court challenges.

Among the needed are people who can't get ID because their state of birth requires a photo ID to get a birth certificate; people - most likely, elderly African-Americans - born in southern states at a time when many births were not officially registered; those with significant problems and virtually no income to get the documents needed to get an ID; those who are really unable to get to a DMV office (persons with disabilities and persons in remote rural areas lacking transport); persons who have no proof of residence (like homeless persons, especially those not in shelters, and persons who live in someone else's house and lack documentary proof in their own names); transient persons without a stable home or address documents, and students, especially in technical colleges, who don't have other kinds of Wisconsin ID (especially students with out-of-state drivers' licenses).

ACLU is circulating a flyer (in the Take Action section of milwaukeeclabor.org) and setting up a phone number and email -- (414) 272-4032, extension 216, and intake@aclu-wi.org - to collect case studies, which will be essential if the ACLU decides to go to court on this basic human rights issue.

In another case, the League of Women Voters is expected to soon file a state court challenge citing a violation of the state constitution -- in fact, the league's lawyer suggests that all those high-falutin' lawyers never addressed the paragraph on voting rights involved. Several legal experts say the challenge is not frivolous, though how it will survive in the current state court system may be an exercise in dubious optimism.

Other groups are readying in the wings, and some suggest that another sort of legal challenge will emerge around that infamous memo from a Department of Transportation muckamuck informing employees not to volunteer the information that the usual \$28 fee for a state photo ID card is waived if the person applying checks a box or asks for voting purposes - a fee waiver made available under the new law to avoid the appearance of an illegal poll tax.

Only . . . if DMV workers are ordered not to tell voters about the free version, aren't they undermining the intent - exposing that the free version was inserted as a gimmick? Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have criticized this memo as underscoring the pretense -- especially after a state employee was fired for simply advising fellow workers in an email what the policy was and what any visitor to a DMV should know in advance.

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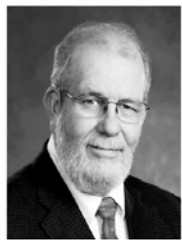
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# Paid sick days, scorned here, rebound in US

The concept of paid sick days - a specific help to working mothers torn between nurturing their children or being fired if they don't want to sneeze germs into a customer's soup - was firmly championed by Milwaukee voters in 2008, fiercely attacked by political hires at the MMAC and resisted by Mayor Barrett who could only see injury to the city from surrounding communities able to undermine the city's higher workforce standards -- as opposed to standing up proudly as an oasis of caring amid a sea of suburban corporate pettiness.

Given the lemming majority makeup of the state legislature, the concept of communities setting higher standards for worker citizenship than the state through sick leave policy was outlawed. The voices of the majority were left high and dry in courts despite the efforts of the 9to5 organization and its lawyers.

But all that history hardly killed the paid sick day movement for low income workers. It actually fueled it. More and more cities and states are picking up the shambles Milwaukee and then Gov. Walker made of the idea, fueled by evidence that the MMAC's objections were not only demeaning to business ethics but frankly nuts in financial terms.

Turns out to be good business to give workers paid time off for illness or to help children in their care get healthy or stay strong in school. Studies from San Francisco and Washington, D.C., after they implemented similar paid sick day policies, suggest profits for businesses



Ellen Bravo (right) pushing the message during Laborfest and good will from customers, just like nearly 70% of Milwaukee voters wanted to see but were robbed of in the lengthy legal battles.

Remember, the attack by the MMAC demeaned voters as in effect agreeing to a free lunch, that paid sick days used to keep sick workers from coughing in your noodles or to care for a sick child was the workers seeking something for nothing, the undeserving would-be welfare queens of legend running amuck. Better, said the MMAC, to give the boss the power to fire anyone who brought up concerns about their children or their own wheezing.

Aside from ethical myopia, the business lobbyists had the financial results wrong. Again.

Crunching the numbers as well as understanding the human values, Connecticut in June passed the first statewide paid sick days law.

Currently the city councils of Seattle just approved sick days legislation and are waiting

for the mayor to sign it, and Philadelphia's council supports the same.

Voters in Denver will be able to support paid sick days on a ballot initiative this November. Massachusetts leaders from the governor on down are pushing a similar law in that state legislature, and in New York City, 35 members of the city council back such legislation.

Not all of these may succeed, but note that, even in Georgia, a bipartisan group of state legislators led by five

Republicans is supporting a bill that would ensure workers could use sick time they've earned to care for their children and loved ones.

Now comes a powerful Internet tool to pound the lesson harder, inspired by the No. 1 movie in the nation. Called "Contagion: Not Just a Movie," the film, produced by Family Values @ Work, shows the stories of five American workers who have been forced to go into work when they are sick because they weren't allowed to take time off or couldn't afford going without pay.

The video can be found in the Take Action section of milwaukeeelabor.org or directly at [www.youtube.com/embed/OL1YTkQGF1Y](http://www.youtube.com/embed/OL1YTkQGF1Y).

These workers are some of the 44 million Americans without paid sick days who risk their families' financial security or their jobs if they stay home when they are ill.

Dr. Barbara Ferrer, director of the Boston Public Health Commission, introduces the film by calling to mind the fictional


"Contagion" and then warning: "What's most frightening is that flu epidemics are real, and they can spread quickly. As a public health official, I know the best thing when you're ill is to stay home. In our country, everyone has the right to stay home; they just don't have the right to get paid, or to keep their job."

Only 19% of low-wage workers have paid sick days. Three in four food service workers, three in five personal health care workers and three in four child care workers, all of whom have significant interaction with others, lack paid sick days.

"Our country's health and families' financial stability should not be undermined by a lack of paid sick days," said Ellen Bravo, founder of Milwaukee 9to5 and now executive director of this national network of state coalitions for paid sick days and paid family leave.

So Milwaukee, take notice and some satisfaction. Even if short-sighted leaders here blocked the will of the people, the concept is on the march. It's like a healthy contagion.

-- Dominique Paul Noth



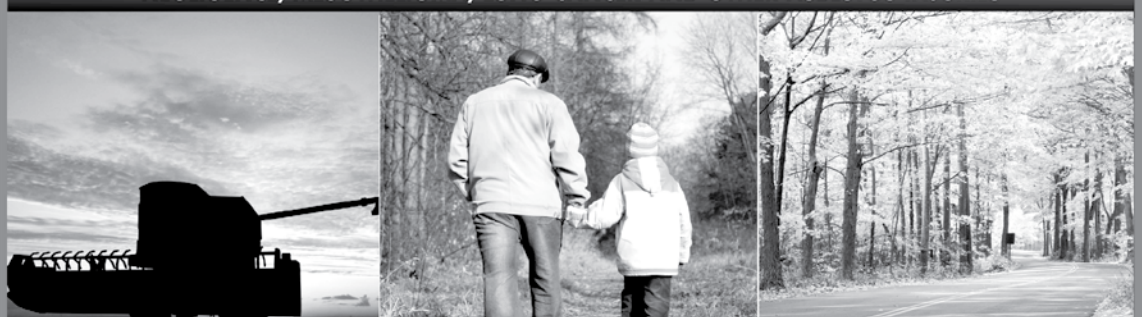
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# Baker's economics talk brings out policy thinkers

What do elected officials do with a night off? Well, the conscientious ones apparently gather more information to explain the economy and push the legislation to create jobs and fiscal common sense.

That thought had to cross the minds of the community organization leaders, union officials and cream of the progressive movement that gathered - in search of ammunition far more than entertainment -- Sept. 15 at the Gordon Park pavilion to absorb a slide show and join a

discussion of the realities of our economic philosophy. It was run by Dean Baker, co-director of the D.C. based nonprofit Center for Economic and Policy Research, a noted author of economic guide books.

If you peeked around the room, past the cluster of cultural leaders such as mask guru Max Samson, school board members such as Larry Miller, state AFL-CIO leaders such as Stephanie Bloomingdale and representatives of the sponsoring groups, including Jack Norman and Karen Royster of the Institute for

Wisconsin's Future, you might have spotted something else.

A lot of public officials were gathering insights and perhaps some pertinent talking points. They have to spend a lot of time debunking overstatements.

Among those spotted: Rep. Sandy Pasch, Ald. Nik Kovacs, Supervisor John Weishan and state Sen. Chris Larson.

They, journalists and inquisitive members of the community peppered Baker after his speech with questions seeking clarification. Because Baker pulled no punches in noting that the wealthy in the US are rolling on a pile of money and that the media is misled in describing their reluctance to invest as they well could, and inflating the problems of giving their fair share to the government.

The key to recovery, Baker said (and here we oversimplify a thoughtful, nuanced presentation) is to understand that tightening our belts is not the way out -- not when only some of us are suffering enough to have to cinch in.

He poked fun at the tendency of the conservatives to not admit the obvious -- that the current inflexibility is unlike their own party's past and even their recent legacy, that stimulus is supposed to mean "spending," and that whatever the mistakes

by Fannie Mae he has written about the two Maes did not cause the foreclosure crisis.

He also faulted Obama for stressing "shovel-ready" projects for federal aid, noting how many enduring projects take years to develop. There is a need to spend money now, he agreed, but the emphasis may injure moving along some projects of considerable worth.

Anyone who heard Baker talk will be far more reluctant in the future to use the word "infrastructure" - since he covered why it needed investment but how the remoteness of language minimized a genuine crisis of neglect.

-- Dominique Paul Noth



Extra chairs were brought in as hundreds packed Gordon Park pavilion for Dean Baker (above). A portion of the crowd revealed Sen. Chris Larson (foreground), Ald. Nik Kovacs (leaning forward) and Rep. Sandy Pasch (seated at right).



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