Good jobs:

Midwest Airlines blindly sheds them

The gloves were off Sept. 11 outside union headquarters across from Mitchell Field on Howell Ave. No more attempts to take a pleasant bargaining tone to save future jobs at Midwest Airlines. The company had revealed its bad faith.

As horrible as things looked last June, the management had now unveiled plans in place for months that sound a "death knell" for the unions and indeed for the company itself, both pilots and flight attendants said.

Since Midwest was refusing to talk directly to the unions and laying down conditions through its union-busting hired guns, the gloves were not only off at the rally.

Speaker after speaker openly slapped Midwest CEO Tim Hoeksm to explain the contra statements. It could be an inter

... but ordinance

By Dominique Paul Noth
Editor, Labor Press

T wo weeks apart, rallies supported by area unions fought for different sides of the same agenda - jobs.

Jobs for the people who live and work in the community. Jobs that elevate them with prevailing wage in construction and jobs with living wages and community benefits in the companies that occupy structures that the taxpayers have helped pay for.

On Page 14 is a story about that first rally by hotel workers. But the most recent rally on Sept. 9 was deeply related to the same agenda - jobs.

Captian Jay Schnedorf, chairman of Midwest pilots' negotiation, summons 9/11 memories at an angry rally.

Midwest continued Page 6

seeks new ones

detail-rich announcement and press conference in the crowded basement meeting room of New Hope Baptist Church, featuring four members of the Common Council, ministers from MICAH, union leaders from both construction and service industries, and the leaders of the Good Jobs and Livable Neighborhoods coalition.

The signs raised throughout the hall said MORE, the new abbreviation for a proposed city ordinance known as the Milwaukee Opportunities for Restoring Employment.

But it isn't about MORE. It won't live here but take our money here. Rapid outsourcing of jobs are decimating Milwaukee area communities and families.

Midwest was at 3,380 employees when TPG investment group took primary control last January amid promises from Hoeksm -- cavalierly accepted by public officials and the press -- that the whole deal was good.

Midwest continued Page 6

GOP brings its election mischief to Wisconsin

W ith five weeks before voters elect a new president, new members of Congress and many governors, the Republican Party is engaged in an all-out effort to turn off or eliminate millions of voters who traditionally vote for Democrats.

In the process, they are injuring some voters they have traditionally counted on, but apparently they don't mind if they can deflect or discourage the massive enthusiasm for Barack Obama and for taking the nation in a better direction.

From Michigan to Mississippi and now Wisconsin, Republicans are actively working to challenge the votes of people of color, the impoverished and students.

In Wisconsin, the highest and lone Republican in major office has exposed himself not as a protector of the right to vote but as a party stooge. He has engaged in what even the state's
Her story also reminds us how raising money has become an inevitable part of any innovation in the art world. "The art world is also lucky that she’s articulate and can sell her ideas," commented one admirer. Agnew is the exhibition because vision and execution combined into genuine artistry, but anyone who sees the work can’t help but think in admiration of the physical effort. She devoted years to gathering just the right labels to recreate, inch by inch, a photograph of a textile worker at one of the sewing machines in a Bangladesh sweatshop.

Even thinking about the amount of sewing and re-doing involved makes an ordinary person want to go take a nap.

Agnew’s work is already featured at the museum and not stored away.

A slide show was evolved for Agnew to take the enthusiasts for the project--heavy-hitters in the art community alongside union leaders alongside rank-and-file workers who could spare $5 or buy a poster.

The museum agreed to let them pay for the work (reportedly more than $100,000, but that was the first “paycheck” that Agnew had seen after four years of work).

The determination to raise the money, artistic enthusiasm aside, reflected the social meaning so obvious to the labor community.

The work offered a stunning but quiet comment on the abuse of workers behind all our design labels.

Agnew is not alone in that regard in this inaugural exhibition vision, which celebrates materials and their renewal and creativity. Other works in the opening exhibition have been fashioned of telephone books, hypodermic needles, gun triggers, sports shoes, dog tags, and old eyeglasses.

If the artists make you think and some are famous. Agnew said in an interview she is honored and even stages tag sales for their company. Among the works: US artist Sonya Clarke celebrates the first African-American millionaire who developed and marketed hair products and cosmetics for African American women. This 11 foot high portrait of Madame C. Walker (1867-1919) is fashioned out of thousand of black hair combs.

Nigerian-based artist El Anatsui has created for this event a shimmering tapestry made entirely of foil from liquor bottles, which workers were paid as payment for slaves.

Agnew is best known as a fabric artist, though she is hard to categorize. Her outdoor sculpture of telephone books, which were once used as telephone cordage, is film-maker Rob Danielson).

The project took over Agnew’s Milwaukee home as well as her life. Even when MAD wanted the work, the museum couldn’t buy it—it was $15 million behind in construction costs.

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The determination to raise the money, artistic enthusiasm aside, reflected the social meaning so obvious to the labor community.
Primary provides a sweep

I

n the end, neither mischief nor money affected the outcome of legislative races in the Milwaukee area in the Sept. 9 primary. What did was trust and proven ability.

In the most tightly contested Assembly race (North Shore and East Side District 22, a vacant seat since Sheldon Wasserman was moving up Nov. 4 to unseat Sen. Alberta Darling), Sandra Pasch squeaked out with 80 votes out of 7,863 cast over Andy Feldman. Milwaukee labor had recommended and campaigned for Pasch, as had law office because of her leadership in health crisis intervention. She is also a nurse, a professor and an active presence in community concerns.

Still, the victory was a bit of a surprise in the field of four since her opponents elevated the price of the game with a blitz of full-color mailings - not from one hopeful but from two. It may have helped Feldman explain his policy background, but it may have hurt in ostentation the candidate everyone expected to make a stronger showing: Dan Kohl. The nephew of Gov. Tommy Davis is expected to make a stronger showing than his uncle.

For organized labor, it was the rare moment when the best candidate for the district - and best on their issues - actually won, though there was a bit of finger-biting election night. The Milwaukee labor council, unable to interview all the candidates for Milwaukee County clerk, made no endorsement. But the primary pretty well decides the winner, and the victor was Joe Czarnezki, once a state legislator. Among those he beat in a crowded field was County Supervisor Jim (Luigi) Schmitt, attempting to move up to a better paying job.

Good for health care

Citizen Action of Wisconsin reported another positive in the primary: A dozen supporters of fundamental health care reform in all regions won their races for the state Assembly. In Milwaukee, Pasch is the new impetus. But in case you knew voters in other Assembly districts, here are the others:

Ted Zigmant (AD 2); Chris Buckel (AD 29); Trish O’Neil (AD 37); Tom Crofton (AD 47); Tom Zamba (AD 66); Nick Milroy (AD 73); John Waelti (AD 80); Judy Reas (AD 87); Kelda Helen Roy (AD 91); Chris Danos (AD 91); and Mark Radcliff (AD 92).

Some will face tough battles on Nov. 4, but others are considered likely to win. The Senate, with an edge of Democrats, passed a far-reaching proposal in 2007, but the Assembly, narrowly, controlled by the GOP, declined to take any action.

In Milwaukee, Pasch is the new hope. The nephew of Gov. Tommy Davis, expected to make a stronger showing than his uncle, is expected to make a stronger showing than his uncle.
Quit ailin’ over Palin

By Donald Kaul
Special to Labor Press

The picture of Sarah Palin that Republicans have been selling us is not unappealing. A salt-of-the-earth sort of gal, a “hockey mom” who has worked on her husband’s fishing boat and in her spare time did a “bang-up job” as mayor of Wasilla, Alaska (population back then maybe 7,500).

Miss Congeniality in the Miss Alaska beauty pageant; “Sarah Barracuda” on the basketball court. She has no foreign policy experience but she can see Russia from parts of her state. She was put forward as the supremely popular incumbent. But the more you learn about Palin, the more blurred or deliberately muddied that picture gets. You keep wondering what’s next.

One thing, however, remains clear:
John McCain’s selection is one of the most bizarre running-mate choices in the history of running-mate choices. It’s the ticket.

George H.W. Bush picking Dan Quayle as a partner? As one writer pointed out, Quayle was Thomas Jefferson compared to Palin.

Geraldine Ferraro? Rep. Ferraro had been around the block 17 times by the time Walter Mondale picked her out of the House of Representatives and put her on the ticket. Palin has never even been to the corner.

I know what you’re thinking: “So now you think experience is such a big deal? What about Obama? Up to now he hasn’t given a lack of experience much weight.”

But never forget, while still a state senator in Illinois, Obama correctly predicted the disaster that the then-impending invasion of Iraq has become. John McCain, for all his experience, hasn’t figured it out yet.

And there’s a difference between not a lot of experience and no experience at all. You can’t just pull someone in off the street, put her next to the president and say: “Be ready. If the big guy keels over, you’re it.”

They say she’s got executive performance so far, he ain’t that unappealing. A big guy keels over, you’re it.

He is willing to make important decisions impulsively, supported by very little information. Apparently, he hardly knew Palin when he chose her and only interviewed her once or twice. (I point out that a president making an important decision based on inadequate information is what got us into Iraq.)

Brief poll bumps aside, he can’t feel that good about his chances in the November election. This is a choice that smacks of desperation, much like Mondale’s pick of Ferraro in 1984. Mondale, however, was running against Ronald Reagan, a supremely popular incumbent.

But do start worrying about the brain inside McCain.

He had a right to be desperate. Looking at the polls, you would think McCain would have reason to be more optimistic and make a less risky choice.

He is a heck of a lot more conservative than we give him credit for.

Yet he chose someone whose views are further out there, not just conservative.

 Palin is anti-abortion rights, pro-gun and favors drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. She has doubts about the human contribution to global warming. She is a devout evangelical Christian but there are indications that she believes in scientific creationism; at least she’s argued that it be taught as a co-equal theory with evolution in Alaska’s schools.

To those who say that we shouldn’t have a religious test for office, I say that belief in scientific creationism isn’t a religious test. It’s an ignorance test.

We have just lived through nearly eight years of an administration that has turned its back on science and most other information, preferring instead to rely on its pre-conceived beliefs to guide it.

We have had enough of decisions made on pre-conceived beliefs. We can’t afford them anymore. We need a leader who looks at all the evidence and chooses a path that matches reality.

Judging from McCain’s performance so far, he ain’t that leader.

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Calendar

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

Wednesday, October 1
MALC Delegate Meeting
6:30 p.m., Serb Hall, 5101 W. Oklahoma Ave.

Monday, October 13
Senior Power Luncheon
11 a.m. - 1 p.m., Wyndham Hotel.
Sen. Feingold keynotes fund-raiser for Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans.
Call WIARA at 414-771-9511

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.

The author recently retired as Washington columnist for the Des Moines Register who “covered the foottomess in nation’s capital for 29 years.” He also describes himself as a two-time Pulitzer Prize-losing correspondent who, by his own account, is right more than he’s wrong.

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It doesn’t take a Freud to analyze economy

By Michael Rosen
Special to Labor Press

During the last eight years almost all of the nation’s income growth went to executives and investors. As a result, the productivity increased and the economy grew to more than $13 trillion a year, most Americans fell further and further behind.

Between 1976 and 2006, the numbers of hours worked by the median two-parent household increased by 400 hours per year. Productivity increased by 18% between 2000 and 2007 alone. Yet middle-income, working-age households -- those headed by someone less than 65 - lost ground over these years. Their median income, after adjusting for inflation, fell by $10,000 from $58,500 to $56,500 (2007 dollars).

In Wisconsin per capita income has fallen $2,500 behind the national average and the gap is growing as Wisconsinites experience the first sustained period of decline in our median wage since the early 1980s. All real income gains in the last eight years have gone to the very richest Americans (52% went to the richest 1%, averaging $1.5 million a year);

Every presidential candidate John McCain, who acknowledges he almost all of the nation’s economic problems, promises to continue these policies.

This is not surprising since his chief economic advisor and odds-on favorite to be named Secretary of the Treasury, former Sen. Phil Gramm, recently denied the country was in a recession, arguing that Americans are “a nation of whiners” and that the recession is a figment of their imagination.

Despite McCain and Gramm’s assertions, America and Wisconsin’s economic problems are real! Over 600,000 workers have lost their jobs since January. In Wisconsin major employers like Delphi, Midwest Airlines, GE Medical, General Motors and the NewPage Corp. (Kimberly) are laying off thousands.

The nation’s 6.1% unemployment rate, the highest since the recession of 1991, actually undercounts the number of unemployed because it does not include those who are working part time because they can’t find full time work. If they are included, the unemployment jumps to almost 11%.

Nine million Americans have lost their health insurance since President Bush took office.

The author teaches economics at MATC and holds a key position on the state technical college board. He is also president of the teachers union, Local 212, AFT.

During the first six months of 2008, 343,000 Americans lost their homes, a 136% increase from the year before.

Gasoline, food, college education, heating and health care prices are soaring, increasing 2% faster than wages.

The Bush administration’s economic policies, including the high income tax cuts – which McCain says he will make permanent – are imposing a 2% tax on the nation’s working people.

Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama has proposed an economic program that includes federal aid to state and local governments, public works jobs programs and passing the Employee Free Choice Act.

The first would ensure that budget cuts by state and local government, mandated by balanced budget statutes, won’t reduce aggregate spending and make the recession worse.

The last would make it easier for workers to form unions. That will ensure that productivity gains and economic growth, when they resume, are shared broadly.

In the middle are public works investment, required to fix the nation’s deteriorating infrastructure, a prerequisite to growth and prosperity.

McCain’s economic program of more of the same will mean more layoffs, more rising prices, tax breaks for the very wealthy and greater inequality.

American workers and their families, contrary to McCain and Gramm preachings, don’t need a psychiatrist.

They need jobs and a raise!

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Midwest

From Page 1

for the airline and Milwaukee.

Now the workforce is 1,800
and sliding. About 400 Midwest
pilots will be down to 119 work-
ing after Oct. 1. The flight atten-
dants are losing 317. Many are
the veterans that passengers rely
on and know flight after flight.

Public relations pretenses
abound. One big one is that
Midwest was keeping 32 routes.
Most have been leased out to
other companies under the
Midwest brand. Not even the
other companies under the

T

The evidence has emerged
that Midwest had been
planning all along to fire
pilots and flight attendants by
renting 12 70-seat Embraer E170 jets to continue Midwest
Connect regional service.

Independent evaluations say
the move can’t be justified by
lower rental costs and or even
the $40 million in loans (with
strings) touted in announcing the
decision.

Passengers and media had
believed that oil soaring to $140
a barrel was the basis for
Midwest problems, not manage-
ment schemes or divestment
plans by TPG or pressure from
people's own unions. Schnedorf said it
was deliberately launched on the
anniversary of 9/11, but he
called commercial airlines were
alsoargets.

"We were the ones
who directly lost our union brothers
and sisters." said Schnedorf.

"Our reaction as pilots was
to make that the last day of our
industry's mourning, to never
forget and never quit."

How ironic, the rally under-
derlined, to look at what happened
and who the enemy now seems
to be. The terrorists and the subse-
quent government reaction near-
lly broke the back of the airline
industry. Many airlines had to go

through bankruptcy or merger, and
it was their workers and
unions who offered concessions
to get through the hard times.

When fuel spiked this year, one
school of thought was to wait
it out and enjoy the new trust and
profitability, and the willingness
to pay fairly for the best service.

Instead the airline industry
and Wall Street almost leaped at
the opportunity to reduce the
flights in the skies, force mergers,
fire workers and squeeze down
wages and benefits. In 2008,
Aloha, ATA, Skybus, Champion
Air and divisions of Midwest
ceased operations. Frontier filed
for bankruptcy.

The big boys were clearly
licking their lips. What the ultimate
impact on safety, schedul-
ing and service will be is still
determined never to quit.

A UWM nursing student
who regularly rides double on a
motorcycle with her boyfriend,
a member of the steinfliners
union, may find him asking her
for a lift. Sarah Neumann
(above) took the Grand Prize
in 2009 Harley Sportster -- off a
winning ticket her boyfriend
bought her at Laborfest.

The big money winners
were also announced. The $500
prize went to Lynn Madaus and
the eight $100 winners includ-
ed Marilyn Ramsdugler, Mike
Kaufman, Greg Hooymon, Anne
Chase, Carmen Dickerson,
Helen Hulmann, Wary and
Ralph Nowak.

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Fun and politics surround workers

Even the side events at Laborfest were busy, such as face painting (above) and the Union Industry Tent, with big crowds inside (bottom). At the outside flaps of the tent, volunteers offered help to Amy Stear, Wisconsin director of 9to5, pushing the Nov. 4 referendum seeking paid sick days for the many low-paid workers left high and dry by businesses.

Ex-Marine and veteran AFL-CIO field mobilizer Mike Balistriere chatted with the Marine color guard he helped arrange to lead off the Laborfest parade.

TOP: Hotel and restaurant workers and families from UNITE HERE posed along 4th Street before the parade (a busy week of marching for the union – see Page 14).

LEFT, BELOW and RIGHT: Fire trucks, Harleys and Teamsters families and children crowded the streets around Zeidler Park.


Children of AFSCME members waited at Zeidler Park for the big parade ride on the big rig.

Even the side events at Laborfest were busy, such as face painting (above) and the Union Industry Tent, with big crowds inside (bottom). At the outside flaps of the tent, volunteers offered help to Amy Stear, Wisconsin director of 9to5, pushing the Nov. 4 referendum seeking paid sick days for the many low-paid workers left high and dry by businesses.
All sorts of slides, games, stage shows and special treats were ready for the children at Laborfest. But on a hot day, a fountain to splash in brought the main attention.

LEFT: Girding for their fight against 70% job cuts at Midwest Airlines, flight attendants along with pilots showed up in force.

BELOW: The best and most comfortable way to do the parade route is always Dad’s shoulders.

Once again the musicians of the MASH entertainment unions, including actors and stagehands, provided showtunes while riding a flatbed arranged by Operating Engineers Local 139. Below, Union Veterans got ready to march with the USW to show their preference for Barack Obama.

One of the first unions in this year’s parade were the three dozen locals of AFSCME District Council 48. Among the paraders below are the CWA, the women of USW, the fancy unionmade convertible of OPEIU Local 9 just ahead of the UFCW marchers and the workers from the UE at Rockwell.

LEFT: Girding for their fight against 70% job cuts at Waste Management, the Teamsters showed up in big numbers with their trucks, flags, retirees and families.

FAR LEFT: The Plumbers carried their youngest along.

BELOW: Various groups within SEIU also marched.

BELOW LEFT: An ironworker used a wagon and a kid to create an amusing advertisement for union membership. Start them young!

Once again the musicians of the MASH entertainment unions, including actors and stagehands, provided showtunes while riding a flatbed arranged by Operating Engineers Local 139. Below, Union Veterans got ready to march with the USW to show their preference for Barack Obama.

Showing support to the camera for their candidate and their union were members of the American Federation of Teachers, which had several divisions in the parade.
All sorts of slides, games, stage shows and special treats were ready for the children at Laborfest. But on a hot day, a fountain to splash in brought the main attention.

LEFT: Girding for their fight against 70% job cuts at Midwest Airlines, flight attendants along with pilots showed up in force.

BELOW: The best and most comfortable way to do the parade route is always Dad’s shoulders.

Among the many contingents in the parade were representatives of 9to5 (the association for working women) and LCLAA, the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, AFL-CIO.

LEFT: Though they were in the middle of a determined strike against Waste Management, the Teamsters showed up in big numbers with their trucks, flags, retirees and families.

FAR LEFT: the Plumbers carried their youngest along.

BELOW: Various groups within SEIU also marched.

BELOW LEFT: An iron-worker used a wagon and a kid to create an amusing advertisement for union membership. Start them young!
Obama fireworks close Laborfest

On three days’ notice the Milwaukee labor council and the Obama campaign drew some 15,000 to 17,000 persons to the Marcus Amphitheater on Labor Day in a special closing event for Laborfest. Some 5,000 free seats went to union members through their leaders while the rest, given away at Obama campaign offices, were snapped up by noon Sunday. This Laborfest was one of the largest in memory, drawing more than 10,000 through the turnstiles in the afternoon. But the evening belonged to Obama, who greeted officials and labor leaders and staff backstage before 6 p.m. and then gave an inspirational yet pragmatic speech in support of unions and American ideals. See Page 11 for the speech and the story.

Wisconsin leaders of labor and politics lined up backstage at the Marcus Amphitheater to welcome the Democratic presidential candidate to Milwaukee. Visible from left are David Newby, president of the state AFL-CIO, Gov. Jim Doyle, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, Rep. Gwen Moore, Sen. Russ Feingold and state Obama campaign leader Tanya Bjork. In this crowded backstage area Obama chatted with old friends and posed with supporters, some he knew well and some he had never met. Among those he made time for were (below) Annie Wacker, vice-president of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council, main sponsor of Laborfest, and Phil Neuenfeldt, secretary-treasurer of the state AFL-CIO.

It was impossible to name all the union members crowded down front at the Obama speech (bottom left). But (above) the photographer could detect some families from the Milwaukee executive board, Candice Owley (left photo) and Tony Rainey (right photo, with his wife, Alberta). LEFT: One speaker introducing Obama to the enormous crowd (below) was an energized and almost euphoric Milwaukee mayor, Tom Barrett.
What Obama said made national waves

Obama took time to shake hands even as grim security teams made sure he wasn’t pulled into the surging Laborfest crowd. You’ve benefited from a union. So I wanted to speak about the middle class and how we sustain it.

“In times of need,” of natural tragedy, he noted, then “there are no red states or blue states, just the United States of America.”

But “I do want to point out the connection of that spirit of unity and the spirit that brought about the union movement.”

Recalling the early days “when a worker could be fired any time” or sent to the poor house or discriminated against, “Somebody got an idea: Alone we are weak but united we are strong.”

Obama summarized to increasing cheers with measured examples of what happened then and what happens now under union organizing, he repeated, “Alone we are weak, but united we are strong. That’s why we call it the UNION movement.”

“Here’s the thing. That spirit I want it back. That spirit of looking out for one another.” He noted ruefully, “That spirit is most evident in terms of great tragedy, when national disaster strikes and takes it out of the realm of politics. But that spirit can’t be just restricted to moments of great catastrophe.”

“I know there are people going through their own quiet storms,” he said, with a mounting ferocity of examples — people seeing “their jobs shipped overseas,” or “seniors who don’t know how to pay home heating bills,” of people unable to fit their gas tanks, or young people ready “to go to college but don’t have the money” — there are also young people right here in Milwaukee, with “no prospects for the future,” seeing the only paths “open to them the casket or a jail cell.”

“All across America there are quiet storms taking place,” Obama summarized to increasing roars of empathy, and “that’s why I’m running for president of the United States.”

It was a speech made more powerful because the spiritual base dominated even as the political intentions were strikingly clear. Those who heard it knew he was staking to get to work on solutions. Those who were there, noted one elderly gentleman in the crowd, “will remember this night forever.”

— Dominique Paul Noh
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CFL-CIO MILWAUKEE LABOR PRESS, Thursday, September 25, 2008

Page 12

Suppress From Page 1

largest newspaper — which has sold a lot of copies on unproven allegations of voter misconduct — to complain of the odor of par- tisan politics that J.B. Van Hollen has brought to his office. The attorney general is now claiming that voters shouldn’t be negatively affected by his actions — but that flies in the face of a lawsuit he has brought. He has sued a state agency to accom- plish what the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel agrees is impos- sible and damaging for Nov. 4: to force the newly created Government Accountability Board to check the names of those who registered or changed their ad- dresses since Jan. 1, 2006, against driver records, even knowing that typos and other benign errors could impact a mil- lion legitimate voters. He is not only hiding behind the technical requirement that data- base delays have made impos- sible (the board has been checking for months) but also has gone fur- ther (the board has been checking a technical requirement that data errors could impact a mil- lion people). The Journal Sentinel noted how “Republicans have long wanted to raise the specter of voter fraud, even though little of it actually occurs. This suit raises that ghost from the dead.” Van Hollen is co-chair of John McCain’s Wisconsin campaign. As such he knows full well how this sort of partisan mischief has been spreading in states that are likely to be battleground or are leaning Democratic. One of the most egregious moves to deny voters their rights is cropping up in the key battle- ground states of Ohio and Michigan. The Republican Party, whose economic policies helped force hundreds of thousands of people out of their homes through foreclosure, now wants to take away their votes as well. Republican county chairper- sons in those states are planning to use lists of foreclosed homes to block people from voting in the upcoming election.

Combined reports by Dominique Paul Noth of the Milwaukee Labor Press and James Park of the AFL-CIO.

Macomb County (Mich.) Republican Chairman James Carabelli told the Michigan Messenger his army of election challengers “will have a list of foreclosed homes and will make sure people aren’t voting from those addresses.” Af- fican American voters in Michigan would be the most affected by the challenges. More than 60% of all subprime loans—most likely kind of loan to go into default—were made to African Americans in Michigan, according to a report issued last year by the state’s Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

Gerald Hebert, head of the Campaign Legal Center, a Washington, D.C.-based public-interest law firm, told the Messenger that using foreclosure lists to disqualify voters is not only “meaningless,” it may be illegal. “You can’t challenge people without a factual basis for doing so,” said Hebert. “I don’t think a foreclosure notice is sufficient basis for a challenge, because people often remain in their homes after foreclosure begins and sometimes are able to nego- tiate and refinance.”

In Ohio, Doug Preisse, director of elections in Franklin County (the city of Columbus) and the chairman of the local Republican Party, told The Columbus Dispatch that he may challenge voters who have foreclosure-related address issues. Such actions are part of a “systematic broad-based effort to put up obstacles for people to vote.” Hebert says that nobody is contending that these people are not legally registered to vote. So when you are compre- hensively challenging people, your goals are two-fold:

One is you are trying to knock people out from casting ballots. The other is to create a slowdown that will discourage others who see a long line and realize they can’t afford to stay and wait.

AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Arlene Holt Baker defined the problem, saying: “We have learned painfully that in this third century of our republic, we cannot take our right to vote for granted. We have to defend it. There are peo- ple in our political system who think that voting is a privilege reserved for those like them—themselves—that it is fair and right to confuse and intimidate people into not voting.”

The news release has also called on Alabama, North Carolina and Tennessee voters to confront Southern black voters with Jim Crow interpreta- tions that are more political than racial, in a major report at www.newsweek.com/id/158392.

The AFL-CIO has even launched a 2008 Voting Rights Protection Program called My Vote, My Right at www.aflcio. org/issues/civilrights/voting- rights.cfm.

It helps ensure votes cast at the ballot box are properly counted, especially those in commu- nities where the public’s political will repeatedly has been compromised by failings in our election system.

With record numbers of newly registered young people eligible to vote in November, Republicans also plan to chal- lenge students who want to cast their ballots.

In past elections, some col- lege students have been denied the right to vote because local officials questioned whether they were full-time residents or if they were voting at the right pre- cinct.

For example, in Virginia, election officials in the county that is home to Virginia Tech issued and later retracted a press release saying college students who register to vote there cannot be claimed as dependents on their parents’ income tax returns.

The news release came late last month during a voter regis- tration drive at the university conducted by supporters of Barack Obama. A former lawyer for the Obama campaign and the American Civil Liberties Union complained, the registrar for Montgomery County issued a revised release saying his office is prohibited from offering advice on taxes or other benefits and suggesting anyone with questions about those issues direct them to the appropriate agency or organization.

In actual fact, there is no influence on voting rights with dependency status.

In Mississippi, Gov. Haley Barbour, a former Republican national chairman, has come up with a novel way of discouraging progressive voters from voting in a close race.

First, Barbour tried to move the hotly contested special election to replace retired Sen. Trent Lott to the bottom of a long bal- lot. With the Republican candi- date possibly facing defeat, polit- ical observers say Barbour want- ed to hide the race where the elderly, poor and people of color in particular may not see it or will give up before they reach it. But a circuit judge has blocked that plan.

So Barbour is contemp- lating another wrinkle to save the seat for interim Sen. Roger Wicker, a Republican who is locked in a tight battle with for- mer Gov. Ronnie Musgrove (D), who has the strong support of union members and people of color.

The idea is that on Election Day the candidates would not be identified by party on the ballot.
Needs of families and concern for citizens drove the Milwaukee labor council to jump-start the United Way side of the labor movement, stirring activities of its Labor Cabinet and anticipating by two weeks the formal kick-off of organized labor’s essential involvement.

At the Sept. 3 monthly meeting at Serb Hall, more than 60 delegates bought the $10 "Live United" T-shirts, put them on or over work clothes and posed for brochures and photos supporting the community campaign, which has raised its goal to $44 million this year. They also cheered the inspirational video and the blunt guest speaker, Tim Sullivan, CEO of Bucyrus International, a former campaign chairman for the United Way and a devout believer in the 80 health and human service agencies that make United Way the "best way to do the most good."

Unions have always been a vital part of the United Way -- in fact, as Sullivan noted, while several executives and CEOs like him do step up to the plate, the predominant givers to the campaign are the people who really can’t afford it, workers just struggling by in our economy and still finding $5, $20, $50 or $100 to give the children, the pregnant teenager, the ex-felon, the confused prisoner, the homeless, the elderly and sick - in fact it is hard to think of a group or a family that United Way doesn’t help.

We are all a step from a disaster, Sullivan noted, but really, we don’t know because of human pride which one of our friends or neighbors already have been quietly rescued by the campaign.

More than 420,000 persons were aided by United Way last year and all signs indicate that the economy today is worse, government safety nets are stretched to the breaking point, inflation is higher, business are closing and more families and children are under attack.

Too late for our deadlines, the Labor Kick-Off Rally took place Sept. 18 at the Center of Excellence. But the massive outpouring of support in T-shirts and enthusiasm by the delegates Sept. 3 heralded “the process of developing exciting new initiatives for endorsing and promoting the 2008 United Way Community Campaign,” the co-chairs of the Labor Cabinet told unions and affiliates in a special letter.

Sheila Cochran, the council’s Secretary-Treasurer, and Scott Redman, business representative for Plumbers Local 75 and a member of the executive board, pointed out that more than 150 locals and union councils have signed certificates of support for the campaign, many promising treasury gifts. But their letter bluntly warned:

“As our economy continues to suffer, we need your endorsement more than ever. Rank and file membership looks for the endorsement from union leadership as approval for their participation. The majority of employees giving comes from those organized workplaces whose union leadership has endorsed the campaign.”

Live United is more than a T-shirt and a brochure. It is a cause and a philosophy.
This rally took place amid the discarded bones of Downtown history. Participants found themselves alongside the remnants of an old Milwaukee brewery, parked temporarily in the dirt, grass and trash field behind the not-yet-demolished Sydney HiH.

Many of the folks at this rally remember the bead shop and ethnic restaurants in the old structure at 303 W. Juneau. Now abandoned and awaiting the wreckers, Sydney HiH and the land around it is the future site of a Palomar hotel with condos — for which the developers are seeking a $2 million subsidy from the city in the form of a TIF.

But this is considered Park East land, and marching to the rally were three dozen members of UNITE HERE led by the MALC’s Sheila Cochran; by Robert Kraig, program director of Citizen Action of Wisconsin, which is conducting a major campaign for health care legislation, and the mascot of that campaign, a healthy cow.

Speakers here sought a delay by the city. Don’t give a major TIF subsidy that leaves the developers free to impose inadequate health benefits for workers occupying the new buildings.

That will undercut Downtown area hotel standards and push the Palomar-hired workers toward becoming like Wal-Mart workers, relying on public assistance such as Badger Care while still getting a free ride on taxpayer money.

Though this Park East land has language to protect construction workers, the concerns expressed tie directly into MORE (see the story on the opposite page). The ordinance to be introduced by Ald. Hamilton would require 75% of post-construction employees in any development that receives at least $1 million from the city to be paid living wage. It also sets up a recruitment program to connect residents to the jobs opening up in new buildings.

But until that ordinance passes, more limited rules affect the downtown hotel plan, being developed by Gatehouse Capital Corp. of Dallas and Ruvin Development of Milwaukee. Insisting on a TIF, they want to build a $145 million “Residences at Hotel Palomar,” with 63 condos available in what is now a bleak landscape on the north side of Downtown.

Current law may or may not allow the city to impose union jobs on the project, conceded Cochran, but these are just the jobs the city needs — not because of high wages but because of contracts between the unions and employers that protect against inside favoritism or hidden discrimination.

Without requirements, the city would also face a transient workforce. Without community benefits attaching to the jobs opening up within new construction, the city is not helping the very people whose taxes are paying for the project. Yet providing more residents with living wage and benefits would represent stability and economic growth.

That’s why the ordinance and community benefits are being roundly supported by the construction trades, though some developers are balking and saying construction will be diminished by the new ordinance.

On the contrary, said the president of the building trades council, Lyle Balistrieri, echoed by leaders of other supportive unions, “We are in sync with the effort.”

Pushing projects such as the Palomar Hotel to adopt post-construction job standards is not a threat to construction jobs, Balistrieri said, pointing to Milwaukee’s “sorry history” of not imposing some sort of standards on the jobs being created in the service arena.

McCain can’t come clean for UAW

Last October, when he needed primary votes, John McCain was questioned by a College of Charleston student about what he personally is doing to reduce greenhouse gasses. He offered the crowd an example, reported the New York Times: He had bought one of those eco-trendy cars for his 22-year-old daughter, Meghan.


“No, Prius.” “O.K., Prius, Prius,” said McCain like a chastened schoolboy. “I ought to know the name of it; I paid for it.”

“Prius,” someone called out. Yeah, Py-russ, the candidate clarifies. “No, Prius.” “O.K., Prius, Prius,” said McCain like a chastened schoolboy.

This September, campaigning in Michigan, the issue was brought up by a TV interviewer (see YouTube) who ran off a list of similar American made hybrids. No, no, said McCain, his daughter had actually bought the non-American car for herself. Contradicting what he said in South Carolina, he claimed he always bought American.

The incident was obviously not about the environment but about hypocrisy. And it prompted an unusual rapid phone press conference by UAW President Ron Gettelfinger in Michigan and UAW officers in Missouri and Ohio -- all states active on the political map and all leaders who have pressed US automakers to diversify and think green.

Gettelfinger denounced McCain for a politically motivated flip flop to hide the real culprit -- “failed Republican administration policy supported by McCain.”

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**Good Jobs**

*From Page 1*

noted business representative David Harris of Laborers Local 113. It's about guts. Poverty continues to rise, there are people here who want to work, there are bumps in the pipeline that prepares them for jobs -- all of which is addressed in the ordinance, carefully crafted over a year.

We need MORE, Harris agreed, but "this is simply about doing the right thing."

"The only question that exists is: Will those entrusted with the responsibility of making decisions DO the right thing?"

The four aldermanic officials present, and ready to support the right thing, were led by chief sponsor Ashanti Hamilton, who briskly laid out the details and intentions of the proposal, and included Willie Wade, Mitele Coggs, and Nik Kovac (the latter two new to the city leadership).

Wade related some painful memories from 2004 when the votes were promised to pass community benefits for Park East projects and then evaporated under political pressure in a hot election year. (Milwaukee County did pick up the slack on its parcel, despite the objections of County Executive Scott Walker, and imposed some community benefits where it could, but even this was hardly that powerful advocacy signal the struggling citizens needed.)

"This time we're ready; the Good Jobs people have done their homework, the city is now in charge of workforce development, and we had better come through," Wade told the crowd. Wade sits on the Workforce Investment Board, as does the labor council's chief operating officer, Sheila D. Cochran. The pointed hint in his remarks was that the WIB, which had taken over from the Private Industry Council (county-run) because of its reported failures and slowness, had better be prepared to move fast -- and move well. MORE support would be a good start.

While he helped fashion and support the ordinance Sept. 29 before a key City Hall committee, Hamilton pointed out that two other aldermen, Joe Davis and Tony Zielinski, had also stepped up.

The speakers noted that these votes mean this community benefits effort, powerfully insisting on residence preference in hiring and support for disadvantaged businesses, is already two-thirds of the way home, but remaining supporters will be tough nuts to crack. Crackers were urged to explain the concept and push reluctant members of the Common Council to understand the need - and maybe not to believe the pessimistic whispers that stopped things cold four years ago.

T

For himself and Laborers Local 113, David Harris spoke passionately about the purpose of MORE Listening were community organizer Jennifer Epps and the Rev. Joe Jackson.

MORE is predicated on a long battle, yet it is also a policy that many city leaders have agreed to with their lips but not with the laws: The taxpayers have the right to insist that their own community benefits from tax incremental financing.

These so-called TIFs allow municipalities to borrow money to pay for infrastructure improvements. That loan from the taxpayers helps developers decide on a project. Money that would ordinarily be used to pay property taxes is used to pay the loan.

One source of resistance will be those developers, noted Ald. Kovac, expecting them to insist that hard economic circumstances were not the time to impose standards in pay, benefits and helping disadvantaged businesses. "I have a different view," he noted. "This is exactly the time."

Echoing those concerns, Coggs talked about what kept going through her mind while touring new developments in her district: "It's not just seeing a building go up on some land; it's the jobs that matter."

Like other speakers she is concerned about evolving the training programs that build the capacity of prepared residents, so that companies see not only the people available but also the abilities.

Jennifer Epps of the Good Jobs coalition drew cheers when she told the crowd that she told the crowd that she is also "proudly introduce myself as a community organizer." But she pointed out that community organizers don't underestimate the work still needed even after a gain.

Milwaukee will not overnight lose its reputation for the highest rate of black unemployment in major cities. Only a real people's campaign -- involvement neighbors by neighbor, education gained step by step -- had any chance of turning things around.

Surveys suggest that 59% of black males 16 and older are out of work, three times the unemployment rate of whites. The bright spots have been the success of resident preference and in union supported training programs, but even that has been too slow, too erratic and not focused enough on capturing new jobs, not just existing construction work.

Carefully written to take advantage of proven success, the ordinance expands the requirements of the Residents Preference Program (RPP) to 30% of all hours for unemployed residents, affecting all new construction projects over $1 million that receive city subsidies.

It also expands support for disadvantaged businesses, insists on prevailing wage and monitors apprentice programs and other training centers.

T
t requires contractors taking city money in that range to follow the stronger guidelines of the Department of Public Works. It strengthens ways for residents who have worked for a contractor for five years to gain apprentice status and deepens the goals of apprenticeships for residents in disadvantaged areas to as much as 50%.

In that sense, it is much MORE than the city is doing now and sets the course for a brighter future. But it's MORE a start than an end. See Page 14.

Key supporters of MORE include the Painters & Allied Trades District Council 7, UNITE HERE, the Laborers, other unions, MICAH (Milwaukee Inner-city Congregations Allied for Hope), the NAACP and the advocacy and research of the Good Jobs coalition.

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