

# STRENGTH-VOICE-POWER

# ACTION!

POLITICAL ACTION FROM MILWAUKEE AREA LABOR COUNCIL

Volume 3

March 25, 2011

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## OUR CANDIDATES BELIEVE in fair play & collective bargaining!

## VOTE THEM IN April 5

Milwaukee County Executive candidate Chris Abele greets voters at a South Shore economic forum



County Board candidate Jason Haas (at left) chats with his predecessor in the District 14 seat, Chris Larson, the newly elected state Senate Democrat who with his colleagues successfully stymied -- at least temporarily -- the Republican attempt to take away public worker bargaining rights. Their flight to Illinois quickly exposed that the real GOP target was unions not budget repair.



A FEW WEEKS AGO JoAnne Kloppenburg was the unknown underdog running against an entrenched deep-pocket Republican incumbent on the Wisconsin Supreme Court. Things are changing quickly - as indicated during a recent workers' Sunday in Madison when Kloppenburg supporters surrounded the candidate (in front). Gov. Scott Walker's dependence on a right-wing majority on the court has become all too clear, and that brought David Prosser's past forcefully into focus - a veteran GOP legislator, Walker voting budding, character witness for a disgraced lawmaker, protector of ethical lapses by a judicial colleague, deciding vote for a bill written by the corporate group that backs him, Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce, foul language attacker of the women justices on the court. The topper was when Prosser clearly offered himself as a "complement" to Walker and the state legislative majority.

**ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.** From no chance to good chance, Kloppenburg is gaining ground based on a record of fair dealings as a Department of Justice attorney for four attorney generals (both parties) - and a convincing debate personality as well. Having someone around who doesn't keep lifting Lady Justice's blindfold to see where the big money is standing -- well, that alone should do it if voters double their efforts on behalf of the underdog and make sure this time to get everyone they know to the polls April 5.

# Take ACTION! -- Don't be fooled again

APRIL 5 IS THE EARLIEST TEST for Wisconsin voters who've learned an important lesson about democracy -- you have to keep fighting for it every day, every election cycle. Because handing control of the future to a minority is losing control of that future.

In just a few months, citizens have learned the steep price of not going to the polls -- and not talking up the issues to your neighbors no matter how painful, intrusive or uncivil it might seem. Because look what happens when you don't.

Did you stay home?  
But will you again?

THE NUMBERS MAKE IT CLEAR that too many stayed home or stayed quiet in November 2010. That wasn't the majority of Wisconsin that turned out, yet it was enough. Elections do have consequence, though one is that there is another election around the corner. And now it starts.

Organized labor clearly did its job in Milwaukee County last November, returning more than 62% of the vote to Tom Barrett, in effect denying Scott Walker majority rule even as he tries to take home rule away as governor. But union members failed to make it clear to the rest of the state, or even to more of their neighbors, what having his approach in charge would mean to all our workers, our jobs and our economy.

We can't take it for granted again. Not just for the sake of union workers, because unions are only a spearhead in the fight for wages, benefits and respect for workers. Unions have been too passive or self-assured. They allowed the opposition to paint "solidarity" as if it were only about the bucks. (Compare our wallets to the opposition and you know that's not true.)

But unions have also been too quick to demean any opponents as only in it for their outsourced corporate bucks. From the response of confused uncertainty and fears about their own future and their children's future, the sleeping giant Walker has roused is about more than the state's minority of union members, more than about money or



Abele talks to Milwaukee council delegates after being endorsed for county exec.

false claims that the state is broke. It's about curbing freedom.

## More than organized labor working to bring change

IT'S NOT ONLY UNION WORKERS who are beginning to realize the larger meaning of such things as bargaining rights and fair dealing in our courts and government. So are many residents who were exploring independent paths or seeking in vain for the old Republican Party, the one that had a philosophical divide with Democrats on how much government could or should do. Many of those who voted for Walker thought in error he believed as they did - in offering "better ideas" that would win by example and through cooperation.

Instead they got an ostrich, head buried in the sand, saying he knows best and doesn't need to listen to anyone, even supporters, exaggerating how his emails are running in his favor when they're not, pretending there is an economic crisis when there isn't. So now it's up to unions, who have always spoken up for the middle class, to set all the voters straight, to explain that standing against him involves a lot more

than union contracts. The fight now incorporates anyone who believes the work teachers do, garbage collectors do, nurses do, custodians do is every bit as tough and necessary to our society -- perhaps more so -- than the work being done at private companies. And that both sorts of work deserve respect and government fairness -- not just letting ruling class friends get tax breaks while working households disappear into sinkholes.

That, fundamentally, is what is under attack. And if the corporate media can't see it, because their advertisers don't want them to, if there are elected officials who can't see it (because they have been taught their electorate will follow like sheep), it falls on the voters to speak up.

SOME MAY WANT TO WAIT for the recalls, but don't you dare. There's a lot that can be done right now:

- **Return the Supreme Court** to simple equity and law - no one can guarantee the outcomes, but it has to be better than the gridlock and conservative slam-dunk we've got now with incumbent David Prosser. Instead, ignore that uphill climbs are hard and get everyone behind JoAnne Kloppenburg.

- **Give county government a chance.** The last thing it needs is an echo of Walker's failed policies, a further drift toward bankruptcy. Instead, Chris Abele has stated flatly that the purpose of county government is to provide the best services possible in the most efficient way, not to reward investors but to help the public. He's open to ideas from everywhere but his principles include protecting full collective bargaining rights for public workers, cooperating with local governments on deals that save the taxpayer money and not accepting false arguments built on the dead hand of the past.

- **Make judges work for all of us.** As a Democratic member of the Assembly, Pedro Colon gave a fair shake to businesses and workers, fighting for the human rights of immigrants and the working poor. Gov. Doyle appointed him judge and now Colon, no stranger to elections, is facing his first for a judicial seat, Branch 18 of Milwaukee Circuit Court.

AND WHO STILL CARES about public education? Our endorsements do. As Walker seeks to reduce state aid for public education, while expanding the voucher school program, few citizens have recognized this as an attack on local control of schools and a further blow to taxpayers. He doesn't need to raise taxes to gouge citizens. Voucher school students through a flaw in state aid are not counted toward a district's

## READY TO VOTE?

On Tuesday April 5, polls are open in Wisconsin from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. **Don't know where to vote?** It's online! Check against your address at <https://vpa.wi.gov/>

To download the Wisconsin ACLU's information card on Voter Protection, <http://www.aclu-wi.org/Issues/documents/WI-VEC-Final.pdf>

public school funding while the district also loses money for each voucher student. Yet Walker is also ending standards on judging these voucher and charter schools, which don't do near as well as public schools.

The voter response so far has been to shrug, suspecting that they will lose influence on their public schools anyway as the governor takes money and control away from the city. But as the political climate changes, as it assuredly will, control of schools falls ever more on who is sitting on the Milwaukee Public Schools board.

So ACTION! cares, and that is why you will see a strong push for candidates who believe in local control and talking to students, parents and teachers -- not decreeing from 70 miles away.

- **We back Terry Falk** for city at large, retired fire fighter **Mark Sain**, a longtime MPS volunteer, for District 1, **Michael Bonds** (board chairman) for District 3, and parent **Meagan Holmon** for District 8.

## Look out for late slime

ONE LAST MINUTE WORD based on a barrage of GOP fund-raising letters we've seen and a sleaze attack by the Milwaukee Journal, which must have been gotten to by its rich Waukesha County advertisers.

Suddenly simplicities are abounding. Read the emails and Abele is not to be trusted because he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. My textbooks tell me so was FDR and George Bush. You will also hear that Abele 16 years ago was intoxicated when driving too fast and -- like members of my own family and probably yours -- lost the original ticket and only paid the follow-up reminder. A stupid moment of the sort a lot of young adults have to live down.

Most people want to be judged on what they've done since. So dropping out of college means little if your reasons were good and your additions to society prove strong over time, a definition of Abele. (The problem comes when you engage in the same dirty tricks 20 years later. A previous edition of ACTION! wrote about someone who did just that and got elected governor.)

So Abele is facing a last minute smear campaign, which doesn't amount to a hill of beans and sure can't erode the image of his opponent standing with Walker as the governor attacked bargaining rights and raised the specter of the National Guard to quell "labor unrest."

Voters in Kloppenburg's run for the highest court had also better expect some well-funded late exaggerations. Particularly now that revelatory emails from a year ago forced Prosser to admit temper tantrums in which he called the chief justice a "bitch" and threatened to destroy her. The only way for his supporters to make voters forget such injudicious behavior is to go on attack against Kloppenburg.

REMEMBER, FOOL ME ONCE, shame on me. (They did last November.) Fool me twice, now you're responsible April 5.

## Tucked in judge's opinion was insight into who we are

HOW IT ALL TURNS OUT DEPENDS on the appeals process, but Dane County Circuit Judge Maryann Sumi on March 19 issued an opinion that resonated for the public.

Without judging the merits of the bill in question, Sumi temporarily stayed the publication and implementation of the bill virtually eliminating bargaining rights for public workers because to get it passed the GOP majority seemed to violate the state's open meeting law.

In doing so she addressed the larger issues troubling the public and probably focused for many why there is real concern about overreach by the governor and the legislative branch. To quote from her opinion:

"I THINK A LEGITIMATE QUESTION MIGHT BE ASKED, how can something so apparently minor -- the failure to provide timely notice prior to a meeting that led to the enactment --- how can a minor failure of notice really halt this bill in its tracks?

"And my answer to that is -- it's not minor. It's not a minor detail. And bear with me for a homely analogy. Those few of you who may have seen the Super Bowl know that there was a much-photographed guy with a cheesehead, and it said "owner" on it. And of course, we all know what that refers to, the fact that the Green Bay Packers are publicly owned.

"IT'S A HEARTWARMING MOMENT TO SEE THAT, BUT IN FACT, IT STATES THAT WE IN WISCONSIN OWN OUR GOVERNMENT. WE OWN IT.

"And we own it in three ways. We own it by the vote. We own it by the duty to provide open and public access to records, so that the activities of government can be monitored.

"AND WE OWN IT IN THAT WE ARE ENTITLED BY LAW TO FREE AND OPEN ACCESS to governmental meetings, and especially governmental meetings that lead to the resolution of very highly conflicted and controversial matters.

"That's our right. And a violation of that right is tantamount to a violation of what is already provided in the Constitution, open doors, open access, and that nothing in this government happens in secret."

Sumi quoted from another opinion: "An open meetings law is not necessary to ensure openness in easy and noncontroversial matters where no one really cares whether the meeting is open or not. Like the First Amendment, which exists to protect unfavored speech, the Open Meetings Law exists to ensure open government in controversial matters."



JoAnne Kloppenburg for Supreme Court



Chris Abele for Milwaukee County Executive



Eyon Biddle, District 10 Supervisor



Jason Haas, District 14 Supervisor



Pedro Colon, Circuit Court



Terry Falk, MPS at large



Mark Sain, Milwaukee Public School Board District 1



Michael Bonds, MPS 3



Meagan Holmon MPS 8

**BEHIND ACTION!**

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Milwaukee Area Labor Council AFL-CIO, 633 S. Hawley Rd., Milwaukee WI 53214.

**Credits**

Design Elements: League of Young Voters under Robert (Biko) Baker.

Research & Articles: Dominique Paul Noth. Comments? [action@milwaukeelabor.org](mailto:action@milwaukeelabor.org)



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