

LABOR WORLD

An Injury to One is an Injury to All!

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DFL legislative leaders made Duluth the first stop just hours after the session ended in a fly around the state to discuss the balanced budget they sent to Gov. Tim Pawlenty, who said he would line item veto and use unallotment (defunding programs) to do things his way.

Recovery Act: Creating green jobs at home

Last Thursday evening, before and after the Duluth AFL-CIO Central Labor Body meeting, workers, environmentalists, and community members came together to learn how the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) can create good, green jobs for Minnesotans.

The events were also training sessions about the Blue Green Alliance (BGA), a joint effort of unions and environmentalists.

Chad McKenna, North East Area Labor Council Field Organizer, Jerry Fallos, Senator Amy Klobuchar's Regional Director, and Joshua Low, John Doberstein, and Katie Gulley of the Blue Green Alliance all had optimistic outlooks on how ARRA will turn America's economy around

now and enhance our quality of life in the future.

Fallos said next month will mark the 5-year anniversary of BGA. The seeds for the organization were planted after labor and environmentalists almost surprisingly came together in the Battle of Seattle to stop WTO talks there.

With the Obama Administration's ARRA, hope for the future is much brighter because of efforts to create a green economy in these tough times.

Fallos said within months of BGA, which he worked for before going to work for Klobuchar, advocating for 25% renewable energy standards, the windmills were being built on the Iron Range. Green jobs will run the gamut of alternative energy, building retrofits, mass transit, and smart grids he said. ARRA funding will cover those items plus health care, education, law enforcement, food, job training, clean water, weatherization of homes to tax credits for energy efficient products like insulation and highly efficient furnaces.

Not only does ARRA have funding for projects that will create and maintain jobs, it has stipulations to help the nation's 13.7 million unemployed (8.9%) with unemployment benefits and COBRA payments

DFL leaders blame Pawlenty for session

Just nine hours after the Minnesota Legislative session adjourned at midnight Monday night, DFL leaders were in Duluth to voice their views of what transpired. In the last hours of the session they passed legislation to tackle the state's \$6.4 billion budget shortfall, which actually was reduced to \$4.6 billion by one-time federal aid.

Republican Governor Tim Pawlenty had been threatening legislators that he would not raise taxes to fund government, would not call a special session, would not shutdown the government, would line-item veto and unallot (defund programs) to the tune of \$3 billion to keep the budget balanced.

In the end legislators sent Pawlenty a balanced budget that didn't rely on wasteful borrowing and allowed the session to end on time said House Majority Leader Tony Sertich.

"We invested in jobs, like the Duluth Airport, we helped local communities with police and fire needs, we kept our medical commitment, we protected schools, jobs, hospitals, and nursing homes," Sertich said. "If he vetoes our budget then he vetoes jobs and health

care access. We tried to negotiate with the governor up to the last minute but it didn't work."

Sertich said DFL members had conducted many town hall meetings prior to the session starting to hear what Minnesotans were thinking.

"We listened and kept those values in mind and we balanced the budget accordingly," he said.

Senator Yvonne Prettner Solon said legislators tried many times to get Pawlenty's attention on issues they had heard about in the meetings.

"We had the pulse of our constituents but he had his own agenda and wouldn't listen," Prettner Solon said. "The legislature is 201 people who are closer to their constituents and should be the ones making plans for the budget. That's better than one person acting as a dictator."

Assistant Majority Leader Sen. Tarryl Clark said Minnesotans should be concerned about Pawlenty's disdain for the state constitution and the way he ignores it.

"This is our sixth deficit since 2002, and now with unallotment it looks like Washington DC in the last

eight years," Clark said in Duluth. "We (legislators) don't even get to consent. People should be worried about democracy."

At the beginning of the session, Pawlenty gave a budget that relied on one-time funding, borrowing, and cruel cuts to health insurance for working Minnesotans. Legislators offered a balanced budget approach that shared the sacrifice. Pawlenty signed all the bills but one, a tax bill that would have protected schools, hospitals and nursing homes. And he line-item vetoed funding for General Assistance Medical Insurance, which provides basic health care for the poorest and sickest Minnesotans. The House made attempts to override the vetoes but failed straight down party lines. DFL control of both the House and Senate wasn't enough as no Republicans dared vote against their party this session after what happened last year when six did on the transportation bill. Three lost their jobs.

Pawlenty will probably act on the legislators' budget by the end of this week Sertich said.

Pawlenty's Last Stand...

By Wayne Cox, Executive Director
Minnesota Citizens for Tax Justice

The legislative session is over. In case you missed the final episode, it turns out the guy we saw all winter behind the Governor's podium acting like the cop trying to arrest the job-killers was actually the perp himself.

Estimates are that between 20,000 and 30,000 mainly private-sector jobs will be lost as a result of Governor Pawlenty's succeeding in forcing through his all-cuts/no-new-taxes approach.

The job losses will be a surprise to many. Blame that on Stockholm Syndrome. The Capitol press gave the public a daily diet of Pawlenty and Rep. Marty Seifert railing that taxes kill jobs. Unreported went the testimony of State Economist Tom Stinson that state budget cuts would cost more jobs than a similar dollar amount of tax increases.

Pawlenty had it exactly wrong. The public had it right. Pawlenty vetoed the tax increases on high income and alcohol that a Star Tribune poll showed two-thirds of Minnesotans viewed as preferable to his level of budget cuts. The legislature passed similar taxes Monday night. Those too will be vetoed after the session.

After eliminating the possibility of new revenues, forty-eight hours before the end of session, Pawlenty laid out for the first time a surprise \$1 billion in additional budget cuts.

Pawlenty's office argued the legislature shouldn't hold any hearings on the Governor's brand new budget cuts. But hearings were held. Mayors identified the extent of police layoffs that would be required. The AP reported University of Minnesota President Robert Bruininks told the commission the loss in state aid would result in approximately 15 percent tuition increases and layoffs of as many as 750 people on top of jobs already being eliminated.

"The cuts would be really savage and severe," Bruininks told a legislative commission. "I think they would cost the state money, cost the state opportunity and cost the state additional jobs in the private economy, so I think it's a really bad bargain for the state to make."

Throwing the University of Minnesota under the bus was

See Pawlenty...page 8

Find out more on page 7 and at www.recovery.gov, www.recovery.grants.gov, www.bluegreenalliance.org, and www.aflcio.org

Assisted Living program on life support, needs calls

A May 12 St. Louis County commissioners Meeting of the whole had little support for the county's Assisted Living Program. Members voted 5-2 to close the program that cares for some of the county's most vulnerable residents, yet it allows them to stay in their apartments at Mid-Towne Manor II and King Manor in Duluth.

The votes to retain the 30-year program came from Peg Sweeney and Steve O'Neil.

Another key vote at the meeting was on a motion to use reserve funds to keep the program viable. It fell 4-3 with Sweeney, O'Neil, and Mike Forsman voting for funding. It had been hoped that Steve Raukar would swing the vote but he chose to vote to end the program.

The final vote on the program could come at the board's June 2 meeting. If, as expected, the board votes to end the pro-

gram it could come sometime in the second half of the year.

Board members Dennis Fink, Chris Dahlberg, Keith Nelson, Mike Forsman, and Steve Raukar are voiced opinions that the private sector can do the job cheaper than the county.

The 50 to 60 people in the program receive care 24-7 from 16 workers, two of them LPNs, affiliated with AFSCME Local 66. Those workers fear the private sector will cherry pick only the most stable residents, forcing many others to have to go to nursing homes. The residents have mental and medical issues that make it impossible for them to care for themselves, yet they are able to live in their apartments.

AFSCME contends that citizens need to have a full menu of options for their health needs. Here are the phone numbers

for the county commissioners:

DULUTH

Dennis Fink 726-2458

Steve O'Neil 726-2359

Chris Dahlberg 726-2562

OUTSIDE DULUTH

Peg Sweeney 726-2450

VIRGINIA

Keith Nelson 749-7108

ELY

Mike Forsman 365-8200

HIBBING

Steve Raukar 262-0201

Green Duluth jobs for youth

Energetic and motivated 18-24 year olds from lower income households looking for a summer job that will make a difference in this community need look no farther than the "Green Duluth" project.

The jobs will pay \$7.25 an hour with some added incentives, be 30 hours a week with late afternoon and early evening hours, and last 8 weeks in June and July.

"They'll be green canvassing jobs that go door to door giving residents energy saving options, they'll plant trees, do park clean-ups, and other outside work," said Angie Miller, Director of Community Action Duluth, which will administer the program for the City of Duluth's Youth Employment Services.

To apply or to find out about income eligibility call 726-1665.

Pancakes for health care for all

The Citizens Federation - Northeast is having a fundraiser for affordable health care for everyone on Saturday, May 30.

This time it's a Pancake Breakfast & Brunch, and it takes place from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m., at Holy Family Church, 2430 W. 3rd St. The price is only \$5 for adults, \$2.50 for kids age 6 to 12, and under 6 are free. There will be pancakes (Todd Erickson's secret recipe you enjoy on Workers' Memorial Day), sausage, coffee, milk, and orange juice.

To buy or reserve tickets in advance, contact the Citizens Fed at 727-0207 or email: admin@citizensfed.org.



Dear Friends,

Thank you for your continued support of United Way of Greater Duluth during the 2008/2009 Campaign.

You helped us raise more resources than last year; resources that will help us meet the increasing needs in our community.

This has been one of the most challenging years in decades, yet you rose to the challenge and supported the United Way campaign again. As the recession has deepened, the needs have increased dramatically in our community; area food shelves have seen a 30% increase in use, with 32% more children and 18% more senior citizens receiving assistance. Calls to our United Way 2-1-1 Information and Referral Service for basic human services are up by more than 54%.

We are meeting the increasing needs in our community because of the support of individuals like you.

On behalf of United Way of Greater Duluth and those we serve, thank you for your generous support and partnership with us.

May you and your organization have success in the coming year.

Sincerely,

Rocklon "Rocky" Chapin
SMDC Health System
2008-09 Co-Chair
United Way Campaign

Steve Decatur
Western National Bank
2008-09 Co-Chair
United Way Campaign



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Grand Rapids • Cloquet • Moose Lake

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IBEW 31 & 242 Retirees' Luncheon
Tues., May 26
1:00 p.m.
C's (1419 Banks Ave)
Members & Their Guests Welcome!

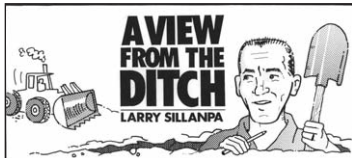
I.U.O.E. Local 70
Monthly Arrowhead Regional Meeting
Tuesday, June 9, 2009, 5:00 P.M.
Duluth Labor Center, Hall B
Dick Lally, Business Manager (651) 646-4566

Sheet Metal Workers' Local 10 Retirees' Luncheon
Tuesday, June 2, 1:00 p.m.
Julie's (403 Belknap)

Need Help? Dial 2-1-1
Not sure where to turn? Dial United Way's 2-1-1 to get connected to resources throughout Minnesota.
For personal services provided by the **Community Services Program** sponsored by the Duluth AFL-CIO Central Labor Body and the United Way of Greater Duluth **Call 728-1779**

Community Services Program
Duluth Labor Temple
2002 London Road, Room 94
Yvonne Harvey, Director

Sign-up for our eNewsletter at www.unitedwayduluth.org



With all that's going on from war to car dealerships closing I'd like to take the opportunity of this time of year to complain about the weather.

But first I must say that your Governor Tim Pawlenty has strayed from his mentor, yes, let's invoke the Great Patriot George W. Bush, on the health care issue. (You haven't seen it yet but in the next three pages you'll be battered by health care in one way or another. Got Band-Aids?)

GWB said we have national health care, what are you complaining about? "The emergency room, don't yah know," is pretty close to what he said. Personally I'd rather go to my dentist with dental problems. Hard to get in a conversation about golf in the emergency room.

Pawlenty just axed the General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC) in Minnesota, a program that many poor people took advantage of in emergency rooms when their medical problems couldn't be ignored. Rep. Tom Huntley

~NOTICE~

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FAX: (218) 724-1413

laborworld@qwestoffice.net

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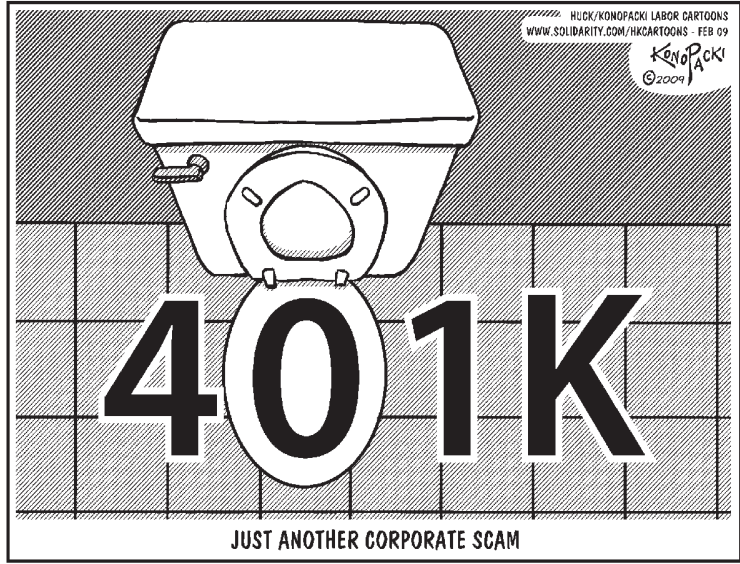
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said people will be dying in the streets. To make things worse TPaw has cut funding to hospitals, so their poor people work will be even more difficult for them to handle gratis. Hospitals will have to take a page out of the U.S. Postal Service manual and set up fences and secured gates to emergency rooms. Might as well have guards with sawed-off shotguns like they do in Third World countries where ever there's a cash register, even if it doesn't have cash-guards guarding an EMOR that doesn't dispense care.

This is all very depressing, like finding out how our workers' compensation doesn't work for injured workers.

That's why complaining about the weather is so enjoyable. People complain about the weather all year long around here and David Ross, Andy Peterson and the Duluth Chamber of Commerce still can only have menacing pictures taken of themselves as they tell us how good things are. Ross is especially fond of giving Old Man Winter the evil eye in his column photos as he tries to scare up a Chamber of Commerce day. They should be like Abigail Van Buren and me and just use the same picture from 20 years ago--very calming.

I don't complain about the weather generally until "spring." Come on, my dentist hasn't even been golfing yet, and I only have 27 holes in because I went to the tropics--Brainerd and Floodwood.

Gardening, you know a tree hugger like me is a gardener so

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get used to it macho man, is a waste of time until June. For those of you elsewhere in the nation reading this think of it. June before you can plant a garden. In three months you rip it up. This is worthy of complaint and taking inventory of one's life. I weeded my vegetable garden Sunday morning without ever having planted anything. I should have gone to church and just prayed for locusts but I can't remember where my church is.

Spring we got none of. The calendar has people excited about golf, gardening, fishing, motorcycle riding, taking the top down on convertibles, and kids are freezing playing baseball and softball for their school teams. Some are so crazy they're wearing shorts and singlets in track meets, running fast in spite of wind chill.

I know how you hate my weiner whining but this weather sucks and plays into the hands of idiots like weathermen who don't believe in global warming or climate change or whatever it is that's happening to us while we're freezing.

A high percentage of emergency room visitors are just stressed out anyway we're told, unless they're carrying their bloody arm in their good hand, in which case they'll be sent to the hospital down the street now. Probably the weather that sent the stressed over the edge. I'm going in before the guard shack goes up. Never could get past security. Right now I gotta go. Got a deadline for a View from the Ditch for this issue.

This Day In History

from www.workdayminnesota.org

May 20, 1933

Rubber Workers went on strike in Akron, Ohio, part of the wave of activism that took place among industrial workers in the 1930s.

What a difference a day makes

By Sec-Treas Phil Neuenfeldt, Wisconsin State AFL-CIO

It's an old song lyric but still true: what a difference a day makes. Like November 4, 2008. It was an historic day nationally with the election of President Obama, but Wisconsin voters also turned the tide at the state level. On that day Republicans lost their long-held majority in the State Assembly. For the first time since 1986, Democrats control both houses of the Legislature and the Governor's office. The labor movement and progressive allies can now actually enact pro-worker legislation that was opposed and obstructed for more than twenty years.

This seismic shift did not just happen. Union members worked long and hard to turn out votes for candidates who support working families. Workers voted for change so that we could finally quit playing defense and really make some gains.

We now have the only State Legislature in the country where the leaders of both houses are also union members. Senate Majority Leader Russ Decker is from the Bricklayers union and Assembly Speaker Mike Sheridan is from the UAW. The committee appointments are key as well: Sen. Spencer Coggs, chair of the Senate Labor Committee, is an AFSCME member and Rep. Christine Sinicki, chair of the Assembly Labor Committee, has a solid pro-worker record.

There are many examples of a new day but just two of them are: AB 172, a bill requiring that labor history be included in instructional standards for schools, just passed the Assembly; and SB 20, which strengthens the penalties for employment discrimination related to equal pay, age, race and other protected classes, was passed by both houses. The right of collective bargaining for UW faculty and academic staff is moving forward.

Union members just participated in a very spirited and successful Wisconsin State AFL-CIO Legislative Conference and Lobby Day--but we know we can never take anything for granted. The mobilization of workers' strength must continue beyond elections and conferences because the other side does not rest. As labor and Democratic allies try to advance workers interests in Madison, corporate lobbyists cry that business is being treated unfairly. During good times they tell legislators that employers will do what's best for workers without legislation. In tough times they say that any legislation that benefits workers is a job killer. According to corporate lobbyists, there is never a good time to be on the side of working families.

We need to remind legislators of the efforts of union members on their behalf, hold them accountable for their votes, and urge them to stick with us in these tough times. It's never been clearer why organized labor and union members must be engaged in the political process. A day does make a difference. It's a New Day at the Capitol.

You're welcome in Carlton Co.

Brothers and Sisters,

As individual workers found out they could get better compensation from their employers if they bargained collectively, unions were eventually formed. Individual local unions in geographic areas found they had common ground with other local unions and decided to work together, forming central bodies.

As you may already know, the three area central bodies have signed a unity agreement merging their finances and are now under the umbrella of the North East Minnesota Area Labor Council. The three central bodies should still stay somewhat autonomous so they can continue and possibly increase Labor's influence in their local communities.

One positive aspect of this merger allows greater participation by delegates from local unions in each of the three central bodies. Under the unity agreement, if a local is affiliated with one central body, they are affiliated with the NEALC, and thus entitled to send delegates to each of the three central bodies.

Through solidarity we have thwarted some of the schemes of the greedy, but too much work remains undone. The challenges of greed go unanswered too many times. Labor needs to reinvigorate itself at this economically crucial time.

If your local union has members that live or work in Carlton or Pine county that want to participate in their community's labor movement they are welcome in the Carlton County Central Labor Body. Our meetings are first Mondays at 7:00 p.m. For more information contact President Bob Oswald, 879-9242.

In Solidarity,
Bob Oswald, President, Carlton County Central Labor Body

SMDC RNs finding that there's no soul in the science of short staffing

SMDC/Miller Dwan health care system has laid off 22 Registered Nurses since March, even though staff was already working shorthanded. The 22 account for 16.5 full time positions and another 6.55 positions were partial reductions of the work force. The result has been even more "holes" to fill in staffing levels.

The Minnesota Nurses Association says SMDC administration has done a good job of fomenting dissension among their employees with the lay-offs and all the job "bumping" that has resulted from the lay-offs.

MNA, which represents 20,000 RNs statewide, says the lay-offs do not follow contract language and has filed grievances over them.

"It feels like union busting" Lynette Swanberg, an MNA

staff rep told over 50 delegates to last Thursday's Duluth AFL-CIO Central Labor Body meeting. Swanberg was joined at the meeting by nine MNA members who work as RNs at SMDC. "Lay-offs are usually based on a lack of work and there's no lack of work for staff."

There may have been a minor decline in patients at the facilities, but staff has been working shorthanded for as long as anyone can remember.

Swanberg said the bumping caused by the 22 lay-offs has actually affected 63 RNs at SMDC. And worse yet, the 22 laid off RNs have all been called back to work to fill holes but they are working without benefits because of their lay-off status.

"Many of them are working as much or more than before

their lay-offs in spite of the "lack of work," Swanberg said. "It shows a blatant disregard for the contract and the intent of the lay-off language. It shows a blatant lack of respect for their employees with the lay-offs and the disruption of so many lives at work and at home."

RNs who are working are concerned with their inability to safely care for patients because of staffing levels.

"We need all the nurses back plus more," said Penny Hawkins who works in Oncology. "Only a few nurses can provide chemo so if there are only two on doing chemo for three patients each, anyone else (needing it that day) may be out of luck."

Karen Teppo worries about staff's ability to safely care for their high acuity patients, some

suffering from delirium tremens (DTs) and dementia. "You come to the hospital for nursing care and we're not able to safely take care of you because of a lack of staffing," she said.

Efram Natale worked in the lab for SMDC as a member of USW Local 9460 for ten years. He was encouraged to go to school to become a Registered Nurse by administration because of the nursing shortage. He went to school, became an RN, and was laid off. "Our (union) contract keeps you safe (when you go to the hospital), now I want my contract to protect me," he told delegates.

His situation is similar to many young RNs at SMDC. While nursing students they had been guided by administration into an "Early Hire" job classification, that was different than being a temporary worker.

"We were told it was the best thing for our career, because after working for a year we could apply for permanent positions," said one employee who didn't want her name used or want to be photographed. "We worked hard to get jobs there and then were

told there were no jobs and we were the first to be cut."

Laurie Kelner works in the Newborn Intensive Care Unit but said you never know where you could end up because of staffing shortages.

"You could be required to fly in the helicopter and after 20 years of nursing I'm not interested in flying in their helicopter," Kelner told delegates. "My supervisor said 'If I tell you to work at Wal-Mart, you'll work at Wal-Mart.'"

Marie Pechek, like Swanberg an MNA rep and Central Body delegate, said only California among the states has a patient/nursing ratio. It is one of the issues MNA is working on in St. Paul and nurses are working on nationally (see story next page).

MNA will hold "all nurses" meetings May 28 and June 8 to decide on a plan of action for the contract violations. In the meantime they would appreciate if supporters of quality care would contact John Smylie, Rocklin Chapin, and Maribeth Olson at SMDC to voice their opinions. The number to call is 786-4000.



Karen Teppo, at podium, told Central Body delegates last week that RNs at SMDC are worried about patient care because of staffing levels falling far short of quality care needs. Some of her fellow MN Nurses Assn. members that attended the meeting are behind her.

Pawlenty's cuts hit Duluth hospitals for \$19.3 million

Governor Tim Pawlenty announced May 14 that he planned to sign the DFL-majority's legislative budget bill and then resolve the state budget shortfall through line-item vetoes and defunding programs (unallotment). That night going alone without public or legislative input, Pawlenty eliminated General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC) in Minnesota.

With that one line item veto late Thursday night, the governor cut \$381 million that was dedicated exclusively to treat the poorest people in the state - including veterans and senior citizens.

Those cuts directly impact hospitals across the state, and amount to a \$19.3 million cut to Duluth area hospitals (\$9.3 million for St. Mary's, \$5.5 million for St. Luke's, and \$4.5 million for Miller-Dwan).

Rep. Roger Reinert (DFL - Duluth) had this to say: "Last night, behind closed doors, Governor Pawlenty single-handedly eliminated health care for 30,000 of Minnesota's poorest citizens - including our veterans and senior citizens.

"Governor "Go it alone" also effectively put the pink slips in the mail for hundreds of Duluth health care professionals - impacting the lives of working families in our community and adding to already crowded unemployment rolls.

"These cuts and job losses are just the tip of the iceberg, and they are unnecessary. They were the result of just one line-item veto. The unallotment power the governor has indicated he will use could eliminate millions more from Duluth hospitals alone, education, and local government aid. We have offered the governor multiple fair and equitable alternatives, but he refuses to consider any option but his own.

"In the remaining days of session, I will continue fighting for Duluth - our jobs, schools, nursing homes, and hospitals. I encourage you to join me and make your concerns and voices heard."

You can call Pawlenty's office at 1-800-657-3717 to let him know that raising revenue needs to be kept as an option for dealing with the budget crisis and protecting services and vulnerable residents.

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Education Minnesota is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and AFL-CIO.

The union of 70,000 educators

Nurses rally in DC for health care reform, staffing levels

By Katrina Blomdahl

Spirits and energy ran high May 13 as hundreds of nurses from all over the country gathered to participate in a National RN Day of Action in Washington, D.C., adding their voices to the nationwide demands for comprehensive health care reform.

The day's activities included an animated morning nurses' conference, followed by a march to Upper Senate Park that gained power along the way, gathering 500 nurses and another 500 patient advocates.

Speakers at the rally included Rose Ann DeMoro, executive director of the California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee (CNA/NNOC); Ann Converso, RN, president of the United American Nurses (UAN); Rep. Eric Massa (D-N.Y.); Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.); and M*A*S*H actor Mike Farrell.

After the rally, a large contingent of nurses advanced on Capitol Hill to lobby for a single-payer health care plan and a strong legislative agenda that

includes two health care bills introduced May 13—the National Nursing Shortage Reform and Patient Advocacy Act, sponsored by Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), and the Nurse and Healthcare Worker Protection Act of 2009, sponsored by Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.).

The energy in the room shot through the roof when AFL-CIO President John Sweeney pointed to the need for a system that provides health care for all: "President Obama and the Congress want to concentrate on turning around our economy, and we're all for that. But our elected officials must realize that we will never have an economy that works for everyone until we have health care that is always there for everyone."

Jean Ross, RN, UAN secretary-treasurer, emphasized that nurses are ready and willing to step up the political pressure to get a system that works for everyone. "Politicians say, 'I can't work wonders, you have to make me.' Well, we're here, and we're strong, and we're ready to make you."

While flexing their political muscle on Capitol Hill, nurses also are strategizing to strengthen their outreach. Ross says: "We care deeply about organizing because the only way we're going to challenge those big hospital chains is by joining our power together."

"With the economy the way it is right now, it is not the time to silence nurses. We have lots of laid-off workers in this country. Many of them should become nurses. We're trying to keep the profession attractive, so that they want to become nurses."

Martha Kuhl, treasurer of CNA/NNOC, pointed to the size of the gathering as a major sign of optimism: "It's incredibly exciting! Looking around the room, you can see that every nurse is excited to be lobbying for patients and for ourselves. As a nurse, you don't want to see a child come in sicker than they should because their family didn't have health care. We don't want patients to not get the care they need because insurance companies deny care or because they can't afford it."

CNA/NNOC board member DeAnn McEwan, RN, says she's ready for structural change in the way we handle health care. "We're defenseless against the for-profit health care industry. Insurers provide no value in the delivery of health care services. They are not licensed or competent, yet they are able to overrule expert practitioners at the bedside. We want to make sure everyone has the care they need without respect to their ability to pay."

Wearing buttons reading: "RNs: the REAL Healthcare Policy Experts" and "Well Behaved Women Seldom Make History," McEwan is a committed activist who sees herself as participating in a strong history of social/political activism among nurses.

May 12 was the 189th anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birthday, and DeAnn McEwan was arrested at the Senate Finance Committee Meeting along with four other health care activists.

Some 40 other RNs staged a silent protest—standing before the committee in red nursing scrubs and turning their backs to show signs reading "Nurses Say: Patients First. Stop AHIP. Pass Single-Payer." (AHIP, America's Health Insurance Plans, is the private insurance industry lobby arm.)

McEwan was reading a quote from Nightingale when police escorted her out of the room. She wanted them to hear Nightingale's call to action:

Were there none who were discontented with what they have, the world would never reach anything better.

McEwan says she didn't plan to be arrested, she just wanted to get the message out.

"As patient advocates, we are disappointed with what we have. We can do better. We should do better."

McEwan was charged with "disorderly conduct" and "disruption of Congress." She finds the second charge ironic.

"They accused me of dis-

rupting Congress, but I think that Congress is disrupting our health care system, and that compelled me speak out."

The RN Day of Action was sponsored by CNA/NNOC, UAN, Massachusetts Nurses Association, Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals, New York State Nurses Association and the SEIU Nurse Alliance.

Katrina Blomdahl is a writer researcher for RNs Working Together, a coalition of 10 AFL-CIO unions representing more than 200,000 registered nurses nationally.

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NALC Zenith Branch 114 Merged President Robert Marshall moves another ton of food collected during the Letter Carriers Food Drive May 9. The weak economy had an effect on donations this year, but the effort still collected 125,555 pounds of food Marshall said. (Yvonne Harvey photo)

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Central Body joins call for AFL-CIO to endorse single payer health plan

When union organizing began years ago for a single payer health care system in the United States, the Duluth AFL-CIO Central Labor Body was one of the first organizations to endorse the plan. It should come as no surprise that delegates to the May 14 meeting joined the effort to push the AFL-CIO to join in supporting HR 676, Rep. John Conyers

single payer health care bill. Delegates unanimously endorsed a resolution that was sent to Richard Trumka, Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL-CIO, asking that at its September convention the labor federation:

- Join in effort to educate and mobilize on behalf of single payer;
- Persevere for passage of

single payer and not endorse or support health programs with mandated insurance or public option plans that include the for-profit insurance industry;

- That the AFL-CIO lobby the White House and Congress for passage of single payer; and
- That the AFL-CIO help organize and financially support a "Healthcare is a Human Right" Solidarity March and Rally in Washington DC.

The HR676 single payer resolution campaign comes out of the Troy (NY) Area Labor Council, which sent materials to the 491 Central Labor Councils and Area Labor Federations of the AFL-CIO.

One of the "Whereas" points of the two-page resolution references the 500 union organizations in 49 states including 125 Central Labor Councils and Area Labor Federations and 39 State AFL-CIOs (KY, PA, CT, OH, DE, ND, WA, SC, WY, VT, FL, WI, WV, SD, NC, MO, MN, ME, AR, MD-DC, TX, IA, AZ, TN, OR, GA, OK, KS, CO, IN, AL, CA, AK, MI, MT, NE, NY, NV & MA) that have endorsed HR676.

Conyers bill has 74 co-sponsors in the U.S. House of Representatives but only Reps. Keith Ellison of Minnesota and Tammy Baldwin and Gwen Moore of Wisconsin.

You can contact congressional reps at 1-866-338-1015. More information is available about single payer at these websites:

unionsforsinglepayerhr676.org
healthcare-now.org
johnconyers.com/healthcare
americanpatientsunited.org
pnhp.org

The Troy information is at www.pefencon.info/HR676/NYS_AFL-CIO_Endorses_HR676.htm.

In spite of the long, strong support for HR 676 among so many trade unionists, the effort to get the AFL-CIO aboard will be difficult.

A key lawmaker on health care, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus, D-Mont., told AFSCME members

from his state that creating a single-payer government-run health care system, eliminating the insurance companies -- "is off the table." That's even though Baucus' own state's AFL-CIO endorsed single-payer last year and re-endorsed it this month.

Baucus is Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee where 13 people were recently arrested for protesting the exclusion of supporters of single payer from two Committee Round Tables on May 5th and 12th. Baucus raised the idea of taxing health benefits at the May 12 Round Table. In response, Gerald Shea, Assistant for Government Affairs to AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, deemed Baucus' proposal to tax health benefits a "radical change" and said, "If we're going to do a radical change, I think that single payer is really the way to go."

You figure out why if you can

When Countries Adopted National Health Plans:

Germany 1883 (126 years)	Italy 1886 (123 years)
Austria 1888 (121 years)	Sweden 1891 (118 years)
Denmark 1892 (117 years)	Belgium 1894 (115 years)
France 1898 (111 years)	Norway 1909 (100 years)
Switzerland 1911 (98 years)	UK 1911 (98 years)
Ireland 1911 (98 years)	Netherlands 1929 (80 years)
New Zealand 1938 (71 years)	Spain 1942 (67 years)
Australia 1945 (64 years)	Finland 1963 (46 years)
Canada 1971 (38 years)	Portugal 1984 (25 years)

U.S.A. Not Yet - (waiting for clean/fair elections)

Source: *Kicking Away the Ladder: Development Strategy in Historical Perspective* by Ha-Joon Chang Anthem Press

Which country spends the most per capita for health care? The U.S.A.

Which country ranks # 37 for delivery & quality of health care? The U.S.A.

And yet in 2008 the U.S.A. gave an estimated \$26 billion out in foreign aid--70% more than when George W. Bush took office. The numbers do not include funds for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. More than 150 countries got financial aid from the U.S. in 2008. The top six were Israel (\$2.4 billion), Egypt (\$1.7 billion), Pakistan (\$798 million), Jordan (\$688 million), Kenya (\$586 million), and South Africa (\$574 million).

The first four got most of the money to buy weapons or for "security" issues. Kenya and South Africa got most of their aid to fight HIV/AIDS or TB.

Source: Parade.com/intel

Maine Legislature for HR 676

Both Houses of the Maine state legislature, on roll call votes, have endorsed a single payer healthcare system and HR 676.

Separately, a recent poll conducted by the Maine Medical Society, shows that a majority of the state's physicians support a single payer healthcare system.

The HR 676 resolution and vote in Maine, follows a roll call vote by the New Hampshire House, which voted 192-150 on March 24 in favor of Resolution HCR2 which endorses HR 676 and a single payer health care system.

In
 For more info visit <http://unionsforsinglepayerhr676.org>

RNC8 resolution helped

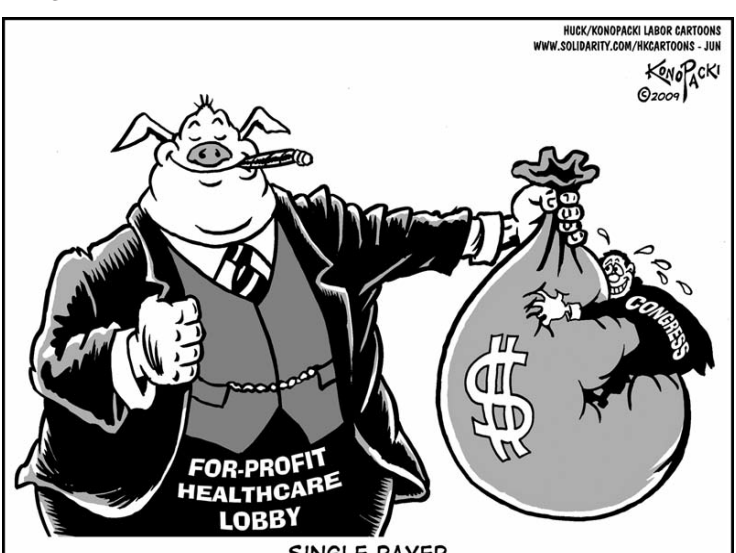
Sometimes you may wonder whether an organization passing a resolution, as the Duluth AFL-CIO Central Labor Body did on behalf of single payer health care in the adjoining article, has any effect. You need look no farther than a resolution that body passed on behalf of the RNC 8 to know it matters.

RNC 8 are the eight people arrested at the Republican National Convention in St. Paul last year and charged with four crimes, including "terrorism." Pressure was placed on Ramsey County Attorney Susan Gaertner to drop the charges and she eventually dropped two April 9 after months of public pressure. Gaertner dropped one count of Conspiracy to Commit Riot in Furtherance of Terrorism, and one count of Conspiracy to Commit Criminal Damage to Property in Furtherance of Terrorism. Those are very serious charges and the Central Body felt they were not justified and could be invoked for many things, including labor protests, under Minnesota's Patriot Act.

In their letter about the charges being dropped, the RNC 8 support committee mentioned only one organization in thanking those who came to their aid--the Duluth AFL-CIO Central Labor Body. Over 3,000 petitions had been sent to Gaertner.

Gaertner is a DFL candidate for governor in Minnesota's 2010 race. She attended area DFL's Solon-Munger Dinner in Duluth April 18 and had a dust-up with Central Body delegates who she chose to sit with. She wanted to know why the Central Body would get involved in the RNC 8 effort, and was reportedly told because it was the right thing to do.

Find out more at <http://rnc8.org>.



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VP Biden gives 1st Quarter Recovery report

On May 13, the day before the Duluth town hall meeting, Vice President Joe Biden submitted his first quarterly report to President Barack Obama detailing progress implementing ARRA. Data used was through May 5, 2009.

Indicators show the recession is improving, as the nation's factories, mines and utilities are no longer in their free fall. Consumer prices have also leveled off.

Biden's report showed early progress providing immediate financial relief for American families and jump-starting billions of dollars in job-creating projects in the first quarter, with both the pace of spending and job creation expected to accelerate significantly in the coming months.

In the first 77 days of the two-year Recovery Act program:

- 150,000 jobs have been

created or saved

- More than \$88 billion dollars has been made available for programs and projects

- Over 3,000 transportation construction projects have been funded in 52 states & territories

- Ninety-five percent of working families have begun seeing the benefits of the Making Work Pay tax credit in their paychecks

- COBRA health insurance premiums have been reduced by 65 percent

- Unemployment benefits have increased by \$25 a week

- States have drawn down \$15.7 billion in Medical Assistance (FMAP) funds, allowing them to avoid budget cuts

- Thirteen states have qualified for State Fiscal Stabilization Funds to improve education programs and save education-related jobs

Looking ahead, an addition-

al 600,000 jobs are expected to be created or saved under the Recovery Act in the next 100 days and billions of dollars in contracts and grants are expected to be awarded in the coming months. The report finds that the anticipated funds are already having an effect on economic and job growth as private sector companies staff up to meet expected demand for their products under Recovery Act programs and state and local governments adjust their spending plans ahead of receiving additional Recovery Act funds.

The provisions of the Act that have had the most immediate effects are arguably those relating to state and local fiscal relief, for example in the fields of Medical Assistance and education funds. For states in particular, the ability to draw down \$15.7 billion of the \$25 billion of Medical Assistance (FMAP) funds has allowed them to avoid further cuts in budgets that were already under serious strain.

Minnesota has seen \$218.4 million in FMAP funds, while Wisconsin has gained \$203.5 million.

The report also includes stories from the field that offer a snapshot of what people living in local communities are thinking and saying about the Recovery Act in their own words. This is the first of a series of updates the Vice President will provide to the President as Recovery Act funds are put to work.

To view the report, visit www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/Q1_ARRA_Report.pdf.

Jobs: Make 'em green & good

by James Parks, www.aflcio.org

If the nation's economy is to truly recover, the funds from President Obama's economic recovery package—the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act—must be spent in ways that keep working families' needs in mind and create a foundation for their future.

To ensure the jobs created under the bill are family-supporting jobs, the AFL-CIO Working for America Institute (WAI) and its brand-new Center for Green Jobs have created standards to help community-level unionists assess the quality of jobs created under the recovery act. They also are urging the forming of new partnerships among employers, government, labor, community groups, environmentalists and other stakeholders to make sure the standards are carried out.

Green Jobs Center Director Jeff Rickert says standards are important because we have to make sure that the idea of the green job is that it is a good job. The blue-collar job was the cornerstone of the golden era. We want to make sure the green collar job is the cornerstone of a platinum one.

The standards include:

- Jobs created by the legislation should be enduring, family-sustaining jobs, in work environments where employers remain neutral when workers seek to join a union. Construction jobs should pay the prevailing wage. And the jobs should provide family-supporting wages, health care and retirement security.

- Employers who receive funds under the act should demonstrate a proven commitment to sound stewardship of public dollars.

- Training and education programs that claim to help workers and future workers qualify for these jobs should be quality ones that offer portable credentials in the rapidly changing job market; have a record of achieving quality job placements; and prepare current and future workers with the education and skills to continuously improve energy and environmental practices.

- Jobs and training programs supported by the act should provide affirmative outreach to communities of color and to other disadvantaged job seekers.

- The benefit of investments under the bill should accrue to businesses that employ workers here in the United States.

- To the extent possible, the jobs created should lower overall greenhouse gas emissions and create positive environmental returns.

Speaking to the first meeting of Vice President Biden's Middle Class Task Force in Philadelphia in March, United Steelworkers President Leo Gerard emphasized that any new green job also must be a good job.

"To rebuild our middle class, we must also be sure that the jobs created in this new, green economy are good jobs with family-supporting wages and benefits, that we maximize the number of jobs created in this economy, and that these jobs truly contribute to the protection of our environment for future generations of Americans."

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Pawlenty plays the part of dictator in his approach to budget...from page 1

apparently worth it for Pawlenty because he got strong praise from local movement conservatives such as Sarah Janacek and Annette Meeks. In Politics in Minnesota, Janacek wrote a glowing account she called "Pawlenty as Patton," with Pawlenty as the Decider blocking the Capitol door to the taxers. Right army, wrong general. I provided a response: "Pawlenty's Last Stand."

Pawlenty then hit the movement jackpot with special praise from K-street gatekeeper Grover Norquist, the guy whose stated view of government is we ought to shrink it until it would fit in a bathtub and drain away.

Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform called Pawlenty a "Hero of the Taxpayer," commending him for "upholding his Taxpayer Protection Pledge and vowing to balance Minnesota's budget without any tax increases passed by the legislature."

Janacek and Meeks say Pawlenty is on his way nationally now. It may not be a moment too soon for the governor because last week's KSTP poll said 57 percent of Minnesotans do not want him to run for reelection.

That number will only grow when the Pawlenty layoffs start mounting, and the next wave of Pawlenty property tax increases hit. The governor was able to hold all the Republican legislators with him on override votes.

Unfortunately, he may be too busy elsewhere to share their task of explaining to local voters why their local property tax increases, hospital job losses, cop layoffs, nursing home inadequacies, community college cutbacks and squeezed schools were preferable to asking high-income Minnesotans to begin paying tax levels almost as high as that paid by the middle class.

In past years whenever Pawlenty forced Republican legislators to walk the plank with him like this, many were defeated by Democrats the following year. Expect the same next year. When Pawlenty was first elected governor, 60 percent of the seats in the Minnesota House were Republicans. They now hold only slightly more than a third. Republicans used to talk about big tent and small tent. Because of Pawlenty, they have added a special category: pup tent.

This session did cement Pawlenty's reputation as an intransigent movement conser-

vative. But that gold star may not take him very far.

Right now, the Republican Party is a party of the South and dominated by evangelicals. Pawlenty has no juice with evangelicals. Last year, he fought against all the evangelicals' presidential choices as a campaign co-chair for John McCain. GOP polls show Sarah Palin, George Romney and Mike Huckabee are the party's favorites. Pawlenty is nowhere on the radar screen in these polls.

If the GOP goes big tent, Pawlenty is even more an outsider. A movement is already afoot to bring the party back toward the center. The Republican U.S. Senate campaign committee is throwing Pawlenty-style Club for Growth U.S. Senate candidates under the bus in states outside the South, places like Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Delaware. They are backing moderates with good environmental records (whose university presidents probably don't view them as "savage").

In Florida, 15 minutes after Gov. Charlie Crist announced last week he would run for U.S. Senate, he drew endorsements for the national GOP and its Senate committee. They endorsed him over a highly regarded movement conservative, even though Crist had just agreed to raise a billion dollars in new cigarette taxes to help solve Florida's budget crisis.

Crist is definitely not your Grover Norquist Republican. Crist incurred the wrath of Rush Limbaugh for standing with President Obama in favor of strong federal stimulus recovery legislation. He put his people over his politics. Crist and Gov. Schwarzenegger are backing strong environmental reforms. For Republicans trying to regain a national footing, a guy like Crist is the future. He knows how to work in a bipartisan way to get things done. Pawlenty is the George Bush past-obstructionist, Governor Gridlock, Governor Go it Alone. That might appeal to the Republican hard-core anti-taxers, but that hard-core can't win national elections.

Pawlenty does use a faux big tent argument. In speeches in Washington, he says the party needs to reach out to convert working-class Democrats—by arguing that tax cuts for the rich will bring them jobs.

Next time he gives that speech, he may want to add an explanation why in last week's KSTP poll, 80 percent of

Democrats think he should not run for reelection.

But Pawlenty doubtless will give it a shot nationally. So I've decided to help him. Here, Governor, are three questions you will need to prepare yourself for in your first presidential candidate press conference.

"Governor, back in Minnesota you thought it was better to take away health cov-

erage from 100,000 low-income persons rather than ask those with highest income to give back some of their tax cuts. How did that all work out?"

"Your state suffered a disastrous bridge collapse. Afterward, you vetoed the legislation that would have provided the finances to repair the bridges next in line to fall.

Does that mean keeping your Taxpayer Protection Pledge is more important than saving lives?"

"In 2009, when you added massive job cuts onto massive unemployment, you were described as the state's job-killingest governor ever. Do you plan to do for the nation what you did for Minnesota?"

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