

Western Workers Rising

a newsletter by you, compiled by the AFL-CIO Western Region

October 2015

Welcome!

Workers around the west are heading into fall with momentum in local elections, community service projects, union member training, and Raising Wages campaigns. All that and more in this edition of our newsletter!

In solidarity,

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Bangladesh Union Leaders Visit Utah

by Brad Asay, President of AFT Utah

AFT Utah welcomed union officials from Bangladesh to their offices for a working lunch on September 21st.

These visitors were on a nationwide tour as part of the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program. The purpose for the visit was to examine **Strengthening Labor Unions and Improving Labor-Management Relations**.

With the assistance of interpreters from the U.S. State Department, all in attendance conversed about the challenges unionists face in protecting the rights of employees and their families.

Our Bangladesh brothers and sisters shared the dire circumstances they face with political corruption and the unsafe working conditions that have led to the deaths of thousands of workers and the atrocities inflicted on union organizers.

These union leaders are facing the challenges that garment workers in the United States had to fight over 100 years ago.

Dale Cox and Steve White from the Utah AFL-CIO shared our union history over the past century and our current struggles.

Feedback regarding the meeting that we received via email stated:

"Your recent meeting with our International Visitors from Bangladesh has positively changed their perceptions of the U.S. and will facilitate meaningful progress for **Strengthening Labor Unions and Improving Labor-Management** upon their return home.

"The Visitors commented that meeting with you over luncheon was by far their most beneficial professional meeting in Utah."

In attendance: Mr. Jashim Ahmed - Collective Bargaining Secretary and Paralegal (BGIWF) • Ms. Moli Akter - President (BCWS) • Ms. Rukshana Yasmin Arzoo - Senior Program Officer (Solidarity Center, Dhaka) • Mr. Md Rashadul Alam Raju - Acting General Secretary (BIGUF) • Brad Asay - President (Utah AFT) • Liz Weight - Vice President of Political Action (Utah AFT) • Cal Udy - Labor Relations Representative (Utah AFT) • Penny Llewelyn - Office Manager (Utah AFT) • Dale Cox - President (Utah AFL-CIO) • Steve White - Political Director (Utah AFL-CIO) • Russ Lamoreaux - Business Manager (IBEW 354)

Douglas County Community Ready to Take Back Their Schools from Corporate "Education Reform"

by Courtney Smith, President of AFT-Colorado and Douglas County Federation

The community, parents, teachers, and school staff in Douglas County, Colorado have been struggling to take back their school district after a hostile takeover of their school board in 2009. That election brought a conservative majority that began their purposeful move to privatize the schools under the guise of "education reform."

Douglas County School District, prior to this takeover, led the state in teacher recruitment, retention, and achievement. However, since the reign of the current school board, the district has seen record numbers of teachers and principals leave for other school districts.

The school board's hand-picked superintendent is working under a 1.5 million dollar contract, while each of the schools is underfunded and must fill the gap by charging fees to parents and holding fundraisers for basic necessities.

The Douglas County Federation of Teachers and Classified Employees and their state organization AFT Colorado, with the help of the Colorado AFL-CIO, is working hard to inform all AFL-CIO members about the truth behind the school board's motives and the negative impacts they have had on the public schools.

The recent release of Education Inc., a documentary by Douglas County resident and parent Brian Malone, clearly tells the story of the corporate takeover of Douglas County's schools as well as other districts across the United States. It is a valuable film to watch for those who wish to join the fight to keep access to free public schools a right for all Americans.

Remember to send in your submissions by **NOVEMBER 13, 2015** to be included in the next edition of Western Workers Rising!

Oregon Hosts 34th Annual SIUW



by Barbara Byrd, Secretary-Treasurer of the Oregon AFL-CIO

Every summer, union women officers, staff and rank-and-file activists from the Western States and British Columbia come together for a week of leadership development, networking, and fun. The event is the Western Regional Summer Institute for Union Women (SIUW), sponsored this year by the United Association for Labor Education and supported by the Oregon AFL-CIO, the Washington State Labor Council, the BC Federation of Labour, and the Northwest Oregon Labor Council. The Institute was hosted by the University of Oregon Labor Education and Research Center.

This past summer marked the 34th year of SIUW in the West. The school took place at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, June 23-27. Over 150 union and community women attended, taking advantage of an exciting mix of classes, cultural events, and direct action designed to strengthen their leadership skills and build their knowledge about the challenges facing the labor movement. Almost half of the participants came from British Columbia, adding a stimulating international dimension to the school.

The participants were enthusiastic, praising their union and university instructors (most classes were co-facilitated by U.S. and Canadian women) – "knowledgeable" and "passionate" were the words heard most often to describe them. The participants valued the "safe space" where they were able to take risks and practice new skills. And, they were unanimous in appreciating the opportunity to meet other union women from industries, states & provinces different from their own.

Next year, SIUW will take place in Los Angeles on the UCLA campus in late August. Plans include participation by an international women's labor delegation and other activities that will take advantage of Los Angeles' exciting labor movement.

For information, contact Liz Espinoza, 562-659-9566 or eespinoz@ucla.edu.

Raise the Wage Victory in L.A. County & Our Road to Other Cities

by Rusty Hicks, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor and Co-Convenor of the Campaign to Raise the Wage

Last year, a coalition of over 260 labor and community organizations pledged to work for a raise to \$15, with adequate paid sick days and wage enforcement in the City of Los Angeles.

This past June, that pledge to \$15 with wage enforcement turned into a reality, and now over 800,000 workers in L.A. will see a positive impact to their daily lives.



The Campaign to Raise the Wage still has a couple of more items to sort out in the City of L.A., such as more paid sick days beyond the state minimum of three days, and the need for real funding to sustain the newly created Division of Wage Enforcement to combat wage theft in the city, with full staff capacity and community partnerships to facilitate legitimate enforcement.

But what happens when you take this victory a step further? This past September, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors passed \$15 an hour with no exemptions for L.A.'s 140 unincorporated areas. This covers roughly one million people living in places like East L.A. that are outside the city limits. The issues of combating wage theft and including more paid sick days weren't included in L.A. County's recently passed ordinance, but our work will continue until we ensure that these critical issues are addressed in the coming months.

We are seeing other cities follow suit with a raise to \$15 as well, such as Santa Monica and West Hollywood. Currently, the Campaign to Raise the Wage is also working actively in Long Beach and Pasadena to ensure they too adopt our same platform. Working families deserve to thrive, even outside the City of L.A.

These victories are no easy feat, and we will not stop until every worker and family in L.A. County receives the dignity and respect they deserve. **For more information, visit: www.LARaisetheWage.org**

Orange County Kicks Off Candidate Academy for 2016 Cycle

by Ana Cabral, Political Organizer for the Orange County Labor Federation

Election season will be very important for labor in Orange County for the 2016 cycle. Among the races that will be highly contested, there is an open bid for the 46th Congressional District, open seats in the State Senate and Assembly, and several local city council and school board positions that will for the first time allow for more equitable representation due to a successful win for District Elections in 2014.

The Orange County Labor Federation is preparing for the elections by holding the first Candidate Academy training for this cycle in October. The training includes presentations from leaders belonging to several affiliate locals. The purpose of the training is to help candidates grasp a better understanding of the issues that affect today's working families and organized labor. The Candidate Academy is designed to familiarize candidates with the political and policy priorities for working families throughout Orange County and the state.

In this training, candidates will learn about public projects, wage theft, the harms of the Parent Trigger Law in our public schools, the costs of underfunding Medi-Cal, and how the Trans-Pacific Partnership will hurt working families.

Over the years, 300 candidates in Orange County have participated in the Candidate Academy training; it is an effective tool in keeping elected officials accountable to organized labor's issues once they have gotten into office.

To be considered for endorsement by the Orange County Labor Federation, candidates must complete at least one academy session.

There will be additional trainings available in early 2016. **For more information contact: ana@oclabor.org**

IBEW 1245 Organizing Stewards Get a Lesson in Leadership at Panetta Institute



This special Panetta Institute event was hosted by Leon Panetta himself, a former Congressman, Secretary of Defense, and CIA Director. Panetta was joined by his dynamic wife Sylvia, and the couple delivered a stirring, first-hand account of how all leaders must take risks to effectively lead. According to Panetta, sitting idly by and waiting for public opinion to change is not leadership - it's just a feeble attempt to keep your job.

This message of taking a risk for what's right really hit home with the Stewards, who know from first-hand experience how important risk-taking is in order to make a difference.

Panetta convincingly argued that next year's election will be the most critical referendum in 50 years. If we as Union members want to protect what is rightfully ours — what we have fought for and what our past brothers and sisters have died for - we need to LEAD. Union members must realize that our way of life is being threatened like never before. If we want to pass our standard of living on to our children, we have to roll up our sleeves, get to work, and lead the way.

More at <http://bit.ly/IBEW1245Panetta>

by Kevin Krummes, IBEW 1245 Organizing Steward

Risk. What do you think of when you hear that word? Maybe the classic board game springs to mind. Maybe you imagine sitting in the bleachers when the Giants play the Dodgers. Maybe, if you're single, it means trying an online dating service for the first time.

These are all valid perceptions of "risk," but for the IBEW 1245 Organizing Stewards, who gathered at the Panetta Institute for Public Policy in Monterey in mid-September, the concept of risk took on a new meaning - as an element of strong leadership.

Idaho AFL-CIO Board Member Runs for Pocatello City Council

by Teresa Thomason, Administrative Assistant for the Idaho AFL-CIO

The Idaho State AFL-CIO is happy to support Nathan Millward, who is running for City Council in Pocatello, Idaho. Nathan has been on the Idaho State AFL-CIO Executive Board for four years. As a member of SMART-UTU 265/78, Nathan is proudly representing Labor in Pocatello.

Nathan will be running on the platform of representing working people, economic stability, and better wages to support a family. As a long time, proud union member, Nathan is eager to speak up for the working people in Pocatello. The Idaho State AFL-CIO is excited to have labor representation on the City Council in Pocatello and we are confident that Nathan can make a difference in his community.

Nathan is a train engineer and conductor for United Pacific Railroad and has been a union member eight years. As President of the Pocatello CLC for six years, Nathan has always been an active member in his union and community. Born and raised in Pocatello, Nathan attended Idaho State University, graduating in 2006 with a degree in Civil Engineering; he also served a two-year mission in Caracas, Venezuela for the LDS Church. Nathan and his wife, Paige are proud parents to their one-year old son, Jett.

We are also looking forward to supporting another Executive Board Member, Jake Ellis, running for a seat in the Idaho House of Representatives in 2016.



Introducing: John Patrick, President of the Texas AFL-CIO



- picture and biography provided by Ed Sills,
Communications Director for the Texas AFL-CIO

John Patrick was elected in July as President of the Texas AFL-CIO, a state labor federation of 235,000 affiliated union members who speak up together for working people in Texas.

Patrick, a member of the United Steelworkers, has worked in the labor movement since 1972, using his experience in contract negotiation and arbitration to play key roles in complex contract talks, strikes and lockouts.

For more than a decade, Patrick has been a member of the Democratic National Committee, though he routinely works with members of both major political parties in the Texas Legislature.

A 1994 graduate of Antioch University, Patrick obtained a B.A. in Labor Studies via the George Meany Center.

Patrick is married to Linda Patrick. They have two sons, Brent and Cooper.

Introducing: Sam Gilchrist, Executive Director of the Colorado AFL-CIO

Sam Gilchrist started as the Executive Director of the Colorado AFL-CIO on September 1, 2015.

Sam brings over 10 years experience in politics and labor to the Colorado AFL-CIO. Prior to becoming the Executive Director, he led workers in Indiana and Connecticut through member-driven organizing drives, legislative fights, and political campaigns at the municipal, state, and federal level.

From 2009 to 2010, he built and executed a statewide plan to secure critical votes from 5 Indiana Members of Congress in the passage of the Affordable Care Act.

And in 2010, he organized Security Officers in Indianapolis in their fight for better working conditions and a union—these working men and women ratified their first contract in 2015, despite Indiana’s status as a Right to Work state.

He also worked alongside other working families in Ohio towards the defeat of SB 5 in 2010, ran successful campaigns to elect pro-working family legislators to the Connecticut General Assembly and State Senate in 2012, and in 2014 built a member-driven program to reelect a Connecticut Governor who supports working family issues, such as paid sick days.



- picture and biography provided by Sam Gilchrist, Executive
Director of the Colorado AFL-CIO

Labor Ready to Walk for Homeless Veterans

by Margarita Chavez, External Relationship Manager for LA Labor Community Services

On Saturday, November 21st, the LA labor movement is participating once again in United Way of Greater Los Angeles' 9th Annual HomeWalk. We are entering a labor team of union sisters and brothers called the "Homeless Heroes." Over the past eight years, we've successfully moved 15,900 homeless individuals into permanent, supportive housing.

Last year's HomeWalk brought together more than 13,000 Angelenos to Exposition Park and raised a record-breaking \$1.35 million to move people off the streets and into homes. But there is still more to do as 40,000 people - Including veterans with children - will have no place to call home in LA tonight.

Labor's "Homeless Heroes" is the only team dedicated to raising funds to help homeless veterans into permanent housing during HomeWalk. Last year, our team also exceeded every goal we set for ourselves in 2014. The Homeless Heroes Team was made up of more than 50 unions, with over 600 walkers, and raised \$25,000 - 100% went towards ending veteran homelessness.

This year our goal is to raise \$30k. The Hilton foundation will then match every \$5K, and after \$30K they will give an additional \$30k bonus. Meaning, we could potentially raise \$90k to end veteran homelessness.

To make a donation or join our team go to www.homewalkla.org; Once there, go to Register and when you are prompted, click on Join Team and choose Homeless Heroes.

If you have any questions please contact Margarita Chavez at (213) 985-1987 OR margaritausec@gmail.com



Northern NV Central Labor Council President Rebuts Misleading Labor Day Coverage

by Mike Pilcher, President of the Northern Nevada Central Labor Council and member of International Association of Firefighters Local 731

The following is an excerpt from an editorial by Mike Pilcher in response to an anti-worker op-ed that ran in the Reno Gazette Journal. Full text of his editorial is available at <http://bit.ly/1MPIrfE>

In her annual Labor Day Op-Ed attacking organized workers, political consultant Randi Thompson again misled readers in numerous ways.

Labor leaders do not "block" bills from passing, lawmakers do. Representatives of business and industry, along with Nevada labor leaders, testified in opposition to legislative bills during the 78th Session (2015) which would have had profoundly negative impacts not only upon workers, but also upon Nevada's economic recovery from the worst recession in 70 years. During that time, Nevada working families suffered tremendously.

Although subsequently amended, Senate Bill 119 was one of many examples of how disappointing and unbelievable the 78th Session was. Shortly after the majority party voted to take away prevailing wages from Nevada construction workers building new schools, the same sponsor of that bill (Sen. Ben Kieckhefer, R-Reno), introduced SB227. That bill proposed scholarships for children of Nevada working families because a new study found that Nevadans rank 50th in the nation with respect to ability to afford college.

Labor [union] representatives are active and retired professional tradesmen and women who are elected [as leaders of their union] in democratic fashion, following the same parliamentary rules of order used throughout the business world. Using derogatory terms like "bosses" or "thugs" to describe labor leaders is a smear tactic intentionally promoted by corporate, billionaire-sponsored think tanks. Such inflammatory rhetoric is both divisive and counterproductive, and results in tasteless comments, such as the New Jersey governor sadly professing his desire to punch teachers in the face.

[...]

Imagine what commerce and labor could accomplish together via a cooperative effort with the goal of prosperity for all.