

LABOR WORLD

An Injury to One is an Injury to All!

WEDNESDAY
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Senator-elect Al Franken met with 40 labor supporters Monday in the Labor Temple, including AFSCME 3801's Kimberly Butson and UNITE HERE 150's Jean Hanson.

Sen.-elect Franken visits labor

U.S. Senator-elect Al Franken is holding roundtable discussions with Minnesota mayors and other elected officials to talk about how we'll face these tough economic times. Following his Duluth meeting he spent an hour with 40 of his supporters in this area's labor movement in the Labor Temple's Freeman Hall.

"I won't forget what labor has done for me," said Franken. "It's fair to say that if not for the people in this room, my staff, and the work of many others I wouldn't be here today. It's also fair to say that when you win by 225 votes, there wasn't a lot of wasted effort."

That vote margin is still being contested in court but Franken said he has had very good decisions going his way in the recount of 2.9 million votes, and especially absentee ballots, in the Nov. 4 General Election. He asked how many people in the room had helped him in the recount and at least eight hands went up.

"We were better organized," Franken said. "Our staff was preparing for a recount before the election was held." He said all legal ballots should be counted and when they are "we are going to win, there's no doubt we won this election."

Franken said he regrets not having been seated in the Senate for the debates and votes that have already occurred. He said the Senate cut \$50 billion in aid to state and local government in their stimulus bill that he would have voted to keep. Franken said he would have been against the financial industry bailout because it had no transparency, not even preventing golden parachutes for people who mismanaged the whole debacle.

"It wasn't about housing and should have been," Franken said. "We could have bought every mortgage in America with the bailout money and prevented foreclosures." He said everyone is paying the price now as the value of their homes has spiraled down. "We need to put a floor under this crisis," he said.

Because he can't be in Washington DC Franken said there is no better place to be than listening to Minnesotans and told the gathering that he wanted to hear about their jobs and what's happening to them. Most of the meeting was a wide-ranging discussion about unemployment that is 20 to 25 percent in the construction trades, pension funds that have lost 25 to 30 percent of their value, the health care crisis that sees workers not being able

See Al Franken...page 2

Stimulus bill has something for everyone

By Mark Gruenberg

WASHINGTON (PAI)-- The \$790 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, known as the stimulus bill, contains something for just about everyone as it tries to help pull the economy out of the deepest crash in at least 24 years. But analysis also shows that not everything everyone -- including in the labor movement -- wanted is in it.

The measure, which the Democratic-run Congress expected to send to President Barack Obama (D) for his signature by Feb. 16, is one-third tax cuts and two-thirds spending. The whole point, Obama says, is to create or maintain between 3.5 million and 4 million jobs which would otherwise go down the drain, adding to the nation's 11.62-million-person jobless rolls and 7.6% unemployment rate.

Obama made those same points on Feb. 12 to a crowd of United Auto Workers at the Caterpillar plant in Peoria, Ill. And when he finished, the head of the still-profitable firm -- which raised its profit margins

in past years by imposing a two-tier contract on UAW, among other moves -- said he supports the stimulus, but did not promise to rehire any of the 20,000 workers worldwide Cat plans to lay off. Details of the bill include:

* About \$50 billion for construction of "shovel-ready" roads, airports, bridges and other projects nationwide. Construction unions estimate each \$1 billion in construction spending creates between 22,000 and 47,000 jobs, depending on the type of project. The unions welcomed the spending, but some leaders -- including Steel Workers President Leo Gerard and Laborers President Terry O'Sullivan -- lobbied for more.

Of that infrastructure spending, four-fifths will go for the immediate projects, while the rest (\$11 billion) is a down payment on upgrading the nation's electricity grid. That will not only relieve choke points, notably in Ohio, that caused blackouts, but put IBEW members on the job doing so.

* \$54 billion earmarked for state budgets. AFSCME lobbied for even more. The money will preserve social services for the jobless, go for highway and school building and to limit layoffs of teachers, fire fighters and others. There's also \$87 billion to states to help pay for Medicaid. States face huge deficits, led by California's \$42 billion.

The smaller federal figure means fewer people will avoid layoffs, especially since -- at the insistence of key swing vote Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine -- part of the states' funds would go not to such people programs but to possible energy retrofitting of schools. AFT official Nancy Van Meter told an 800-person "Thinking Big Thinking Forward" conference of progressives and unionists on Feb. 11 that a delegation of New York Teachers was in D.C. that day lobbying for more education money.

"The stimulus money for education was cut in half and the school construction money

See Stimulus works...page 5

Minnesota will get big help from stimulus

Minnesota 8th District Congressman Jim Oberstar, chair of the U.S. House of Representatives Transportation Committee, drew the blueprint for the economic stimulus package expected to be signed this week by President Barack Obama.

Just days after Nov. 4's election, Oberstar unveiled "A Proposal To Rebuild America By Investing In Transportation And Environmental Infrastructure." It's finally been accepted by others as a good deal for the country. Minnesota will benefit as well.

"The country is lucky to have a House Transportation Chair that understands the issues like Jim does," said Craig Olson, President of the Duluth Building & Construction Trades Council. "When he showed us his plan last year we were blown away and now it looks like it will really happen. We all need this stimulus."

"Buy American" language in the stimulus bill, officially the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, should mean taconite from the Iron Range will be used to make American steel. Oberstar laid the groundwork to invest in "shovel-ready" projects that could be started immediately. The landmark legislation is expected to create and save 3.5 million jobs.

"First and foremost, this is a jobs bill. It will put Americans

to work at jobs that pay a living wage; by this June, we could see as many as one million new jobs nationwide," said Oberstar. "In Minnesota, the road and bridge investments alone will generate over 15,000 jobs in the next year."

The White House estimates that the legislation will create or save 66,000 jobs in Minnesota. However, a recent analysis of the recovery bill by Moody's said it could create as many as 91,000 jobs in Minnesota by 2010.

"Unemployment in Minnesota is 7.6 percent, and if we don't take action, unemployment levels could climb into the double digits," said Oberstar. "The recovery bill will hold unemployment down, put people to work, and give them the money to pay bills, mortgages and educate their children. That is the economic activity that will help our economy recover sooner rather than later."

Glen Johnson, Business Manager of Minnesota's statewide International Union of Operating Engineers /Local 49 said, "This blueprint to recovery is a major victory for the nation's working people, and that also means victory for everyone in this country. Not only is there a significant investment in the nation's infrastructure, meaning a substantial amount of work for the

men and women in the construction industry, but the \$400 per worker credit for lower- and middle-income taxpayers will prime America's economic pump and create even more jobs in the process.

"We are grateful to the support from many of organized labor's longtime supporters on Capitol Hill, in particular Minnesota's own Jim Oberstar."

The total dollar figure for Minnesota is expected to be just over \$9 billion of the \$787 billion total when construction, health care, aid to local government, and tax breaks are considered in the state.

Still Agriculture Committee chair Rep. Collin Peterson, of northwestern Minnesota's 7th Congressional District, voted against the stimulus bill, the only Minnesota Democrat to do so. The three Minnesota Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives all voted no.

Sviggum's proposed workers' compensation changes draw ire of many in labor

By Barb Kucera
Workday editor

ST. PAUL - Labor and Industry Commissioner Steve Sviggum is recommending some major changes in the state's workers' compensation system, including cutting coverage for undocumented immigrants and providing incentives for injured workers to waive their legal rights. But a state advisory council may not go along with the more radical aspects of his plan.

When a worker is injured on the job, the worker's compensation system provides for medical treatment, partial payment of wages while a worker recovers and assistance in rehabilitation and retraining.

Under this "no-fault" process, workers are covered regardless of the circumstances of the injury and employers who purchase worker's compensation insurance are immune from lawsuits. The

goal, Sviggum said in the annual Workers Compensation System Report, is "to make people as whole as soon as possible after an injury and return them to work."

In 2004, 124,000 workers' compensation claims were paid in Minnesota, according to the Department of Labor and Industry.

Last March, Sviggum - whose department oversees the workers' compensation system - announced the formation of three working groups to examine health care, vocational rehabilitation and billing and auditing processes. The work groups include members of the 12-person Workers Compensation Advisory Council, created by the Legislature in 1992. The council is split evenly between employer and employee representatives.

Sviggum said the system was in need of reform and charged the working groups

with identifying changes that could be presented to the Minnesota Legislature for action this year.

In December, while the working groups were still engaged in discussion, Sviggum presented the Advisory Council with a 53-page list of recommendations.

Among the provisions:

- Eliminating any workers' compensation benefits - except medical care - for undocumented immigrants injured on the job in Minnesota.

- Increasing payments by 10 percent to any injured worker who agrees not to use an attorney while pursuing a claim.

Not only was the content of the recommendations surprising, it was unusual for a commissioner to independently propose changes to the system, according to people familiar with the process. Since the inception of the Advisory Council, the practice has been for business and labor representatives to reach consensus on a proposal, which the commissioner then takes to the Legislature for action.

As Speaker of the Minnesota House of Representatives Sviggum guided through onerous changes for injured workers to the state's workers' comp system. He had a lifetime AFL-CIO voting record of only 28 percent on legislation affecting workers.

Al Franken stops by...from page 1

to afford it, some hospitals failing while others are building at times when they are severely understaffed, unfunded regulations, mandatory overtime that is hurting families, the devastating consequences of cuts in local government aid, to the lack of incentives in "green" building.

Franken said when he is seated in the Senate he expects to be on the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee and should have an opportunity to work on many of those issues. That committee's acronym is appropriately "HELP." He also thinks he will be on the Indian Affairs and Aging committees.

When asked about labor's #1 issue, the Employee Free Choice Act, Franken said Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) has stated, "We're waiting for Franken." Franken will be the 59th Democrat in the Senate and place his party within a whisker of the 60 votes needed to stop obstructionist, Republican filibusters on a progressive agenda.

Sheet Metal Workers' Local 10 Retirees' Luncheon
Tuesday, March 3, 1:00 p.m.
China Cafe (1623 London Rd.)

SHEET METAL WORKERS Special Order of Business

"Allocation of Funds" will be conducted at the regular March meetings of the **Duluth** and **Iron Range** areas of Sheet Metal Workers Local 10.

The **Duluth-Superior** area **SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS** will be held in Wellstone Hall of the Duluth AFL-CIO Labor Center, 2002 London Road, Duluth, MN on Monday, March 9, 2009 at 5:00 p.m.

The **Iron Range** area **SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS** will be at the Hibbing Park Hotel, 1402 East Howard Street, Hibbing, MN on Tuesday, March 10, 2009 at 7:00 p.m.

All members are encouraged to attend.

~Dennis J. Marchetti, Business Representative

IBEW 31 & 242 Retirees' Luncheon
Tues., Feb. 24
1:00 p.m.
Dry Dock
Members & Their Guests Welcome!

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Falsani firm's free workers' comp seminar March 5

The Falsani, Balmer, Peterson, Quinn & Beyer law firm will host their free, highly informative, 2009 workers' compensation seminar Thursday, March 5 at Duluth's Holiday Inn.

Registration and a complimentary continental breakfast are from 8:30 to 9 a.m. in the Great Lakes Ballroom.

A free lunch is part of the day with guest speaker Dr. Todd Loushine, an Assistant Professor in UMD's Dept. of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering. He is an expert in the field of work place safety.

Presentations wrap up at 3:15 p.m. but attorneys from the firm are available for questions at the end of the day.

Seminar topics include:

Overview of benefits, proposed changes @ 9:00;
Outline of a comp case (do I need a lawyer?) @ 9:30;
Rehab and training @ 10;
Gillette/repetitive trauma injuries @ 10:15;
~BREAK @ 10:30~

How employees ruin otherwise good cases @ 10:45;
Insurance company medical exams @ 11:15;
Hypothetical cases evaluation panel @ 11:30;

~LUNCH Noon to 1:15 with speaker Loushine~

Getting medical bills paid @ 1:15;
Motor vehicle accidents, other third party claims @ 1:30;
SS, LTD, PERA, long term benefit systems @ 1:45;
Construction arbitration system @ 2;
~BREAK @ 2:15~

Employment law and FMLA @ 2:30;
Family law and WC, SS, and PI @ 3:00.

To reserve a spot at the seminar contact Gayle at 723-1990 or 625-1857 by Friday, Feb. 27.

Parking is free for the event in the Holiday Center ramp.

I.U.O.E. Local 70

Monthly Arrowhead Regional Meeting

Tuesday, March 10, 2009, 5:00 P.M.

Duluth Labor Center, Hall B

Dick Lally, Business Manager (651) 646-4566

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



IBEW Local 242 Members Annual Fringe Benefit Meeting

This important meeting will be held Saturday, Feb. 28 at 9 a.m. in Wellstone Hall ("A") of the Duluth Labor Temple, 2002 London Road. Every year this meeting is important but in light of what has happened in the financial markets, this year the Trustees are recommending increasing contributions to the Local Pension, and Health and Welfare plans.

At the meeting presentations will be given for Local Pension Parts A, B, D, and 401-k.

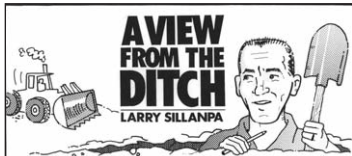
Reports concerning our Emergency, Strike, and Vacation funds, International Pension, Health & Welfare, and NEBF will also be given.

A Code of Excellence presentation will be given.

Vacation checks will be available at the meeting.

Please plan to attend this special meeting.

~Jim Brown, Bus. Mgr., IBEW Local 242



Gov. Tim Pawlenty has used "no new taxes" as his mantra until state government has been starved into a \$7 billion deficit. What else would you do if you must genuflect before the Republican National Committee and the Grover Norquist's of the country who want to "starve government and drown it in a bathtub."

We've been waiting to see what Republicans were going to do after announcing Nov. 5 that getting their butts kicked in the General Election was a wake up call for them.

TPaw has seen the light and appointed a panel to muddle through our mess. His 21st Century Tax Reform Commission came out with their Valentine's present to Minnesotans by announcing that taxes should be cut. Then they said other taxes should be raised in order to get the state's economy humming again. Trouble is TPaw's tax reform commission says the taxes that need to be cut are those the state imposes on corporations.

~NOTICE~

Next issues of Labor World:
 March 4, 18; April 1, 22;
 May 6, 20; June 3, 24;
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 Nov. 11, 24; Dec. 16.

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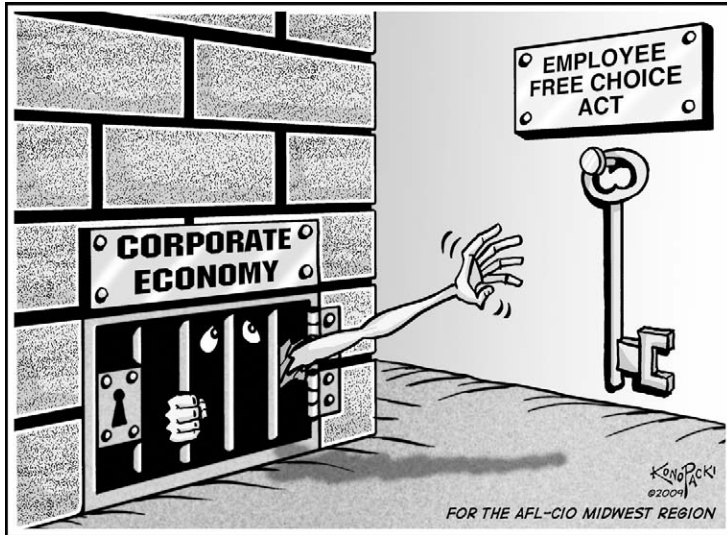
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FOR THE AFL-CIO MIDWEST REGION

In fact they say to eliminate those taxes all together.

The taxes they would like to see raised are the most regressive of all--the sales tax, the one that hits low income families, and the rest of us, the hardest, and doesn't make rich folks blink until they buy the big ticket items they have to have. Things like cars that cost what our homes cost, airplanes, yachts, and other necessities.

They threw in a cigarette tax hike too. Didn't say if it was to fund universal health care.

Tax policy is hindering growth said Michael Vekich, chair of TPaw's tax commission. Isn't that what we've been saying all along. The lack of taxes is starving government? That's how Republicans got us in this pickle with cuts.

TPaw knew what he wanted in his commission's report so he appointed the right people to it. Here are the unbiased positions members of the 21st Century Tax Reform Commission hold: Medtronic's VP of corporate tax; chairman/presi-

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dent/CEO of Northern State Bank; a Duluth accountant, Danielle Buchberger of Eikill and Schilling; chairman/CEO of UMI Inc; Target's VP/Treasurer; Minnesota Taxpayers Assn.'s director; StarTec Investments' president; ION Corp's CEO/president; General Mills director/senior tax counsel; U.S. Bank's VP of state taxes; Minnesota High Tech Assn.'s president; a University of St. Thomas finance professor; and a Wilkerson Associates guy. And you thought you wouldn't get a fair shake out of your governor! You don't see anyone from Water Boarding R Us do you?

Gov. Pawlenty is a servant onto his people! He's upset about taxes being raised on consumers and doesn't "embrace that portion of the commission's proposal," said his henchman. Well isn't that nice. He's got something to throw out as he pursues eliminating corporate taxes.

Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle wants to help balance their \$5.7 billion deficit with a new tax on businesses that operate in the state but have main offices elsewhere. Figures he can raise \$215 million in a few years.

If you think the poor and middle class have been ripped off to pay the rich you should visit <http://kelsocartography.com/blog/?p=1320>, which is a reprint of January's Harper's article "The \$10 Trillion Dollar Hangover."

Hair of the dog, anyone?

This Day In History

www.workdayminnesota.org

February 18, 1918

The International Association of Fire Fighters was founded, in part to protect the health and safety of its members.

Fire fighting remains among the most dangerous occupations in the United States.

For more on the IAFF, go to the union's website, www.iaff.org

Why retirees should care about the Employee Free Choice Act

by George J. Kourpias, President, Alliance for Retired Americans, www.RetiredAmericans.org

Unions built the middle class. By standing together, we fought for and won better wages, health care and pensions, and safety and respect on the job.

But much of what we achieved is crumbling in today's troubled economy.

Many of us worry that our children and grandchildren will not live as well as we have. More than ever, American workers need the good wages and benefits that they can best achieve through collective bargaining.

As the former president of the Machinists union – and now as president of the Alliance for Retired Americans – there is no doubt in my mind that the fate of workers and retirees is undeniably linked.

We cannot have a solid, stable retirement unless we have a solid, stable middle class. For example, union workers are three times more likely to have defined-benefit pension plan than non-union workers. And union workers are five times more likely to have health insurance than non-union workers.

To me, it is no coincidence that as it becomes harder for workers to form and join unions, more and more Americans are struggling to take care of their families, see a doctor or get a prescription filled, or retire with any sense of comfort.

According to the National Labor Relations Board, in 2007 nearly 30,000 workers faced illegal employer retaliation for trying to join a union – that is five times as many as in 1967.

How do we change this? Workers and retirees must fight together to pass the Employee Free Choice Act so we can finally crack down on companies that break the law and try to block a worker's freedom to join a union.

What can retirees do to help?

First, talk to your children and grandchildren. Polls have shown that younger workers may not be as aware of the benefits of collective bargaining. Tell them all about what our generation went through to create jobs that could support a family. And how much it hurts to see it all slipping away.

Next, tell your Representatives and Senators in Washington. Call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at 202/224-3121.

Retirees have a lot at stake in this fight. We know what collective bargaining did for us, and we want only the best for our children and grandchildren. If we stand together – retirees, workers, and community leaders – we can pass the Employee Free Choice Act and restore economic security to people of all ages.

Easterling to succeed Kourpias

(PAI)-Retired Communications Workers Sec.-Treas. Barbara Easterling, once the highest-ranking woman in U.S. labor, will succeed George Kourpias this month as president of the Alliance of Retired Americans, the AFL-CIO's 3-million-member retiree organization. He has led ARA since it was founded in 2001.

Easterling, who retired last year from CWA, was AFL-CIO Sec.-Treas. in 1995. She ran on the fed's ticket with President Thomas Donahue that year but they were defeated by SEIU President John J. Sweeney and Mine Workers President Richard Trumka in the federation's first-ever contested election for its top two jobs.

In half a century with CWA, Easterling rose from an entry job at a Cleveland telephone company to the union's second-highest post. She was an outspoken advocate of equal representation of women and minorities in union office.

"Quote, Unquote"

"Those who presided over the last eight years - the eight years that brought us to the point where we inherit trillions of dollars of deficit, an economy that's collapsing more rapidly than at any time in the last 50 years - don't seem to me in a strong position to lecture about the lessons of history."

~Larry Summers, 8th Director of the National Economic Council, on Congressional Republicans' opposition to President Barack Obama's economic stimulus plan.

Mikael Sundin to lead Labor World in 2009

President/Treasurer Mikael Sundin (Painters & Allied Trades Local 106) will lead the Labor World's Board of Directors in 2009 after being re-elected at the paper's quarterly meeting Feb. 12.

Re-elected as vice president was Paul Iversen (Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees

Lodge 1710). Elected as secretary was Larry Anderson (Laborers Local 1091).

Officers are elected every year.

At the paper's Annual Shareholders Meeting held the same night, Sundin and Iversen were re-elected to two-year terms on the board.

Elected to the board for the first time that night were Rick McDonald (IBEW Local 31), Division Jayme McKenna (AFSCME



Mike Sundin

Local 66), and Dan O'Neill (Plumbers & Steamfitters Local 11).

Retiring from their service on the board were Tom Selinski (IBEW Local 242), Marlys Wisch (CWA Local 7214, Retired), and Shane Sweeney (Grain Millers Local 167G).

Selinski and Iversen were both elected to the paper's board in 1991, and the longest serving among current members.

Other board members include Al LaFrenier (UNITE HERE Joint Board), Mike Kuitu (Operating Engineers Local 49), and Susan Jussila (Minnesota Nurses).

Labor World Inc.'s 2008 financial report showed that the paper finished in black ink for the 16th year out of the past 19. One of the biggest reasons for last year being able to avoid 23 consecutive months of red ink was that delegates to the Duluth AFL-CIO Central Labor Body voted to increase their taxes that they pay to support the paper as of September.

With this issue Labor World mailed 18,300 papers to union households and offices as well as other paid subscribers. Subscriptions have increased by 60 percent since 1990.

The first issue of the Labor World was published April 11, 1896, making it the oldest labor paper of the three left in Minnesota, and one of the oldest, if not the oldest, in the nation. It is now published 23 times a year.



Al LaFrenier



Andy Campeau checks his work in the Minnesota Pipe Trades Apprenticeship Competition at Plumbers & Steamfitters Local 11's Training Center last week.

Plumbers & SteamFitters #11's apprentices do well

Plumbers & Steamfitters Local 11 hosted the Minnesota Pipe Trades Statewide Apprenticeship Competition at their Airpark training center last week and the local boys did very well.

Seven different local unions affiliated with the United Association in Minnesota sent their competition's winning apprentices to compete in welding, rigging, plumbing, refrigeration, pipe fitting, sprinkler fitting, and HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning).

"Our apprentices did very well," said Business Manager Jeff Daveau. "They've received great training from our JATC Coordinator Jack Pezze and our instructors. We've got a lot of good apprentices in all five of our classes."

Apprenticeships take five years to complete. They are based on hours working in the field, training done nights and weekends, and successful completion of written and performance tests.

Taking first in the competition's Plumbing Division was Local 11's Dan Seeley, a fourth year apprentice.

Taking first in HVAC was Local 11's Jeremy Stewart. He is only a 3rd year apprentice but came out on top over more experienced apprentices.

Andy Campeau rounded out Local 11's high finishers with a second in the Pipefitting as a 4th year apprentice.

Winners of each division now advance to the UA's regional competition in Chicago. Those winners will go the UA national competition in Ann Arbor, Michigan later this year.

February is



Black History Month



Members of the Labor World's Board of Directors include (front row) Paul Iversen, Jayme McKenna, Susan Jussila, and (back row) Mike Kuitu, Rick McDonald, Larry Anderson, and Dan O'Neill.

Cloquet says "no" to workers

The Cloquet City Council passed an ordinance Feb. 3 on a 4-3 vote that keeps city employees from holding any elected positions in the city. Councilors Barb Wyman, a city civil engineer, and Erik Blesener, a city cop, will not be affected by the ordinance until their current terms expire.

Carlton County Central Labor Body President Bob Oswald and a dozen other CLB members at the meeting were upset by the vote.

"The residents who voted for current city councilors which this ordinance would affect were well aware of their employment with the city," Oswald said. "And in the case of Councilor Wyman, the public voted overwhelmingly for her in the past election. It seems to me that the public spoke on how they feel on this issue - they don't see it as an issue." He said a Minnesota Supreme Court case says working and holding office in a city are not incompatible.

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✓ Questions answered reliably, accurately		Allegations of re-dispensing product that has been returned
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✓ Ready Refill™ (Automated Refills) authorizations		Two week delivery, often LATE
✓ Free in town prescription delivery		Do you want your meds sitting in a 110 degree mailbox?
✓ We contact doctors for refills		Some require you to get your own refill authorizations
✓ Monthly health screenings		Why trust your health & safety to a nameless, faceless person?
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Stimulus works for all...from page 1

was zeroed out" by the Senate, she said. "Getting a good education is vital for prosperity."

Negotiators restored part of the funds, and included the school construction money -- which would also help employ Building Trades workers -- in the state aid.

But economist Sterling Newbery told Press Associates that Boston-area graduate students he hired for the progressive Tom Paine Project to analyze the stimulus bill reported the Senate's cuts would result in fewer new jobs for women and minorities.

* The bill also contains \$15.6 billion to increase maximum Pell grants to help students afford college, an Obama goal.

* Retention of the Senate's modified "Buy American" provision, saying all projects in the bill, not just the infrastructure projects, should use U.S.-made materials, as long as those purchases are made "in a fashion

consistent with worldwide trade rules and obligations" for government procurement. The Steelworkers and the Congressional Steel Caucus pushed the Buy America plan, saying it continued 75-year-old policies.

* Extended unemployment benefits and a subsidy to help jobless workers pay COBRA premiums to their former employers in order to keep health insurance. But the amount for the COBRA premium subsidies was cut down, thus lessening how many weeks each jobless worker could get federal funds to help pay for health care.

There's a \$20 billion increase for food stamps.

* \$1 billion for a "near-zero emissions power plant(s)," which ties in with Obama's plants, begun in the stimulus bill, to encourage energy efficiency and reduce emissions of carbon into the atmosphere. Negotiators said they expect the money to go to a large

FutureGen "clean coal" power plant in downstate Illinois, creating hundreds of jobs.

* The three Senate moderate Republicans who provided the key votes to avoid a GOP filibuster exacted a cut in the bill's overall price tag. That was in a trim of Obama's "Making Work Pay" cut in payroll taxes, reduced from \$500 for a single taxpayer and \$1,000 for a couple to \$400 and \$800.

* A tax deduction for new car purchases, inserted by Sen. Barbara Mikulski, D-Md., and designed to help sales as the three U.S.-based car companies hit the financial rocks, was severely cut. A \$15,000 tax credit for all home buyers, inserted by Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga. -- a former real estate man -- was cut in half and limited to first-time buyers. Defaults on sub-prime mortgages, and the shady securities they were bundled into, led to the economic meltdown. Isakson opposed the stimulus bill.

Stimulus: A new New Deal?

WASHINGTON (PAI)--The combination of the need to remake the U.S. economy so it is driven by production and workers, and not asset bubbles, and the progressive instincts of the Obama administration offer the chance for a "New New Deal," speakers at a big progressive conference on jobs and the future of the economy said on Feb. 11.

But the very first speaker, Columbia University historian Alan Brinkley, warned not to take the analogy too far, since FDR's policy went back and forth, sometimes repealing his stimulus measures in the late 1930s -- while passing laws that stimulated demand by raising people's incomes, such as the National Labor Relations Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act. The latter law created minimum wages and overtime pay.

And the new New Deal could still be derailed because "economic orthodoxy resting on scarcity and balanced budgets" is "still a great force," Brinkley added.

Robert Borosage of the Institute for America's Future, a conference co-sponsor, argued for even more infrastructure spending than the \$50 billion in the \$789 billion stimulus bill headed for Obama's desk. "We experience every day" the breakdown of infrastructure and the need for modernization and repairs, he said. "We see it in hours spent in traffic jams, potholes in our roads and trailers as classrooms for our kids" due to lack of funds for school construction. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., Borosage said, "railed against the stimulus as 'a down payment on future investment.' Well, that's the point. They (the Republicans) drove us off a cliff, so we have to construct a new economy."

Gov. Ed Rendell, D-Pa., echoed the same theme. "Use the stimulus only as a down payment on fundamental change. If not now, when?" he asked. Election, Oberstar unveiled "A Proposal To Rebuild America By Investing In Transportation And Environmental Infrastructure."

Krugman: Think past stimulus

by James Parks, <http://blog.aflcio.org>

Once the nation's economy begins to recover; we should build a durable and broadly shared prosperity. That was the message Nobel laureate Paul Krugman brought Feb. 11 to the first in a series of "Thinking Big/Thinking Forward" conferences on ideas to turn around the economy. HE said that to prevent the nation's economic pit from becoming a permanent trench, we will need a combination of fiscal and financial policies that will require the government to invest in the economy to spur demand.

Krugman, who won the Nobel Prize in economics in 2008, disputed Republican claims that the best way to stimulate the economy is through tax cuts. "There's more bang for the buck from government spending than from tax cuts."

Krugman added that the one thing conservative opponents of the stimulus legislation fear the most is that when the economy recovers, people will look back at the government programs and say they were a good thing. And that would reverse the mantra of the past 30 years that "less government is better government."

"We have spent 30 years shortchanging public investment in the name of 'government is bad' -- 30 years shortchanging the things government can do to make us richer and our lives better."

Larry Mishel, president of the Economic Policy Institute President (EPI), agreed: "It's about economic security. We need health care for everybody; we need retirement security. We have a labor market mechanism that's broken. We have institutions that are weak, that don't really guarantee that when we have a growing economy, that we have living standards growing.

"We also need to pursue globalization on a different basis -- not on the corporate agenda, but in a way we can help people in other countries grow as well as protect the living standards and prosperity in our country. We need to this in a bold way and in a sustainable way."

This first conference will focus on the need for substantial, strategic and sustained public investment in our future. Future meetings will address the other core elements of a new economic strategy to create a widely shared and sustainable prosperity in a global economy. It is time to think anew. This conference is designed to help begin that effort.

Shared prosperity calls for a "revived social contract to replace the private-sector promises on health care, pensions and job security that have been shredded by the corporations and the financial speculators."



Town hall meetings have been hearing from citizens worried about the consequences to health care, housing, and state services in Gov. Tim Pawlenty's proposed budget. A meeting Saturday, Feb. 7 at the DECC found many AFSCME Council 5 members testifying. Another meeting is Friday, Feb. 20 at 9:30 a.m. at Duluth City Council Chambers. The same day at 1:30 p.m. a meeting will be held in Virginia at the Mesabi Range Community and Technical College. You can put your ideas online to <http://budgetforum.senate.mn> or www.house.leg.state.mn.us/budgetsuggestions.asp.

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Plymouth foundry workers trying to survive 4 months of being locked out

When Nick Hill decided to come to Duluth to talk to the Duluth AFL-CIO Central Labor Body about his union being locked out for four months at Plymouth, MN's Progress Casting Group's foundry, he was amazed at what he found out when he visited Bruce Lotti in USW Local 1028's office.

"Their scrapbook about their lockout at the foundry here was exactly the same as what we're going through," Hill said.

"There's definitely a game plan that is followed in these attempts at union-busting," said USW 1028 President Lotti.

Hill is like a lot of the members of Glass, Molders, Pottery, Plastic and Allied Workers (GMP) Local 63B at Progress Castings. He has worked there for 16 years, but he's low on the seniority list.

"We've got a lot of guys who have worked there for 30 years or more, one's been there for 47 years," said Hill, who has been Shop Chairman for 10 years. "45 percent of the workers have 10 or more years."

Now all 200 of the AFL-CIO-affiliated members are out of work as scab replacement workers do their jobs. It's been that way since Oct. 27, 2008.

"We all got called by management on Sunday, October 26 and were told we didn't have jobs anymore," said Hill. "Their replacement workers were working the Monday we were locked out."

GMP unionized the aluminum foundry in 1946. There have been ownership changes but current owner Bill Berber has had Progress Castings, one of seven A-Tek companies, since the mid-1980s.

"Berber hires managers to run his company, and we've had our disagreements, but never went on strike," Hill said. "We were told the company lost \$10 million in 3 to 4 years



Nick Hill spoke to Central Body delegates about the lockout of his GMP local.

recently so Tim Metder was brought in from Michigan to manage in 2007 and that's when things went to hell. The first year we had 70 grievances."

In May 2008 in an informal meeting Berber told workers "our current financial situation is not the union's fault but we need some flexibility in the union contract." Then the company proposed taking away seniority, reduced vacation time, forced overtime, forced holiday work, and a two-tier pay scale.

"Any place the contract mentioned that the union and management would work together, they took out," Hill said. "They said they wanted a safe plant but wouldn't even work with us and OSHA to try to make it better."

It does sound a lot like USW Local 1028's problems at MEI, now ME Electmetal.

Foundries are hot, dirty, unsafe, brute force work environments by nature, irregardless of what type of castings they produce. Even the aluminum at Progress must be heated to 1500 degrees to pour it said Hill.

Progress has a lot of big time clients including Harley Davidson, Hobart, GE Medical, Rolls Royce, Polaris, Bombardier, Teledyne, and Lennox transmissions.

"We've been writing letters to the customers and unions at their sites to let them know that the shoddy work they're receiving is not being done by GMP members," said Hill. "They can track the castings stamped from October 27, 2008 and we've heard about

quality problems and scrap parts."

GMP filed charges with the National Labor Relations Board but withdrew them knowing how they'd be treated by the Bush Administration's NLRB. With the Obama Administration in place the union will refile Feb. 20th and hope to find a more sympathetic NLRB.

"We're also going to sue them in federal court for \$2.1 million for using a lockout to violate the WARN Act," Hill said.

The Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act has protected workers and communities since 1989 by requiring a notice of a plant closing 60 days in advance if over 100 workers are employed at the site.

In these tough economic times work is hard to come by for anyone who has lost their job. Being locked out is as bad as it gets.

"Our members that are eligible can get unemployment, but that all will end in April, so we're hoping for the stimulus package to have extensions," Hill said. "My family is like most in that we can't afford COBRA payments to keep medical benefits. We're finding resources to help like food banks, but we're all dealing with our bills and trying to heat our homes."

The stimulus bill Obama will sign this week has in it extended unemployment benefits and a subsidy to help jobless workers pay COBRA premiums to their former employers in order to keep health insurance. But the amount for

the COBRA premium subsidies was cut down, thus lessening how many weeks each jobless worker could get federal funds to help pay for health care. There's also a \$20 billion increase in food stamp help.

Hill said because he and his co-workers live in many different counties, some drive 100 miles to work, they've had a difficult coordinate resources. He said he has gone to workforce development training where there are 40-60 people trying to use computers. Staff told him they were more used to dealing with 2 or 3 people seeking retraining in the past.

Hill said he and his co-workers feel like they've been kicked in the stomach by the company after doing all they were asked to do for years and now being locked out.

"Even if the lockout ended today for some unforeseen reason, the company still doesn't have many orders and half of us wouldn't be called back," he said.

There are no jobs to be found in this economy and the prospects are dim for the families of GMP Local 63B.

"The company seems to think they can get by with the temps and break us," Hill said. "We expect them to try a decertification vote of the union after a year."

Duluth Central Body delegates made a nice donation to the GMP workers. If you'd like to contribute send donations to: GMP Local 63-B, 2520 NE Kennedy St., Minneapolis, MN 55413

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**AFL-CIO Community Services and United Way Partnership
Liaison Program by Yvonne Harvey**

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These resources are only a few that are available to you in the Twin Ports area. For more information on other available resources call **211 (United Way's Information & Referral)** by dialing 211 from your home phone or 1-800-543-7709 from your cell phone; or contact Yvonne Harvey at 728-1779 for assistance.

CEOs overpaid and undertaxed in U.S.A.

By Holly Sklar

In today's mad world, underpaid workers are bailing out banks and corporations run by overpaid, undertaxed bosses who milked their companies and our country like cash cows.

While workers across America were losing jobs, homes and health insurance, Merrill Lynch paid nearly 700 employees more than \$1 million each in bonuses last year, amounting to a \$3.6 billion bonus bonanza while Merrill lost \$27 billion.

Workers have been sacrificing for years. Average worker paychecks are worth less now than in 1973, but CEOs and other rich Americans not only make much more, they pay less in taxes.

Average full-time workers made \$41,198 in 1973 and \$37,606 in 2008, adjusted for inflation.

CEOs made 45 times as much as workers in 1973 and more than 300 times as much as workers now. The top tax rate was 70% in 1973 and just 35% now; taxpayers pay the top rate on the portion of taxable income that falls within the highest bracket and pay lower rates on income below that. The top rate for capital gains on the sale of stock and other assets was 36.5% in 1973 and 15% now.

Irrational pay and tax cuts have generated a massive redistribution of income and wealth from workers to CEOs, hedge fund managers and others in the richest 1%.

By 2006, the richest 1% had increased their share of the nation's income to the second-highest level on record. The only year higher was 1928 -- on the eve of the Great Depression.

According to the latest IRS data, excluding tax-exempt interest income from state and local government bonds, the richest 400 taxpayers had an average adjusted gross income of \$263 million each on their federal income tax returns in

2006 -- up from \$221 million in 2005 and \$67 million in 1992, adjusted for inflation.

Remember, that's annual income, not accumulated wealth. \$263 million comes to more than \$5 million a week.

In 2006, the 400 ultrarich were taxed at an average rate of 17% -- down from 26% in 1992. The ultrarich get most of their income from capital gains. The capital gains tax was cut from 28% in 1992 to 20% in 1997 and cut again to 15% in 2003.

To make matters worse, the rich cheat more on their taxes. Forbes recently reported on a study using IRS data showing that taxpayers with income between \$500,000 and \$1 million a year understated their adjusted gross incomes by 21% in 2001, compared to 8% for those earning \$50,000 to \$100,000, and lower rates for those earning less.

We should raise taxes at the top so the nation's richest bosses no longer pay lower effective rates than workers and we can start reversing the obscene rise in inequality rather than reinforcing it. President Obama's plan to cap CEO cash pay at \$500,000 for senior executives at companies on the government dole sounds better than it is, affecting few firms and full of loopholes.

At the very least, President Obama should not delay restoring the top tax rate to the 39.6% rate that prevailed in 2000. The Bush tax cuts saved the top 1% nearly half a trillion dollars between 2001 and 2008, reports Citizens for Tax Justice.

The \$79.5 billion in tax cuts for the top 1% in 2008 was more than the budgets of the Department of Education and Environmental Protection Agency combined. In 2008, it took an annual income greater than \$462,000 just to get into

the top 1 percent.

Even better, we should add a top rate of 50% on income above \$1 million, as advocated by Netflix CEO Reed Hastings among others.

People for whom \$1 million and above is an annual paycheck should pay more so people for whom \$1 million is an unattainable lifetime fortune don't have to.

If we don't start taxing the wealthy more now, then you can be sure that the mountain of debt created by tax cuts and the bailout will be used to drive "entitlement reform." Workers' last forms of security -- Social Security and Medicare -- will be on the chopping block to pay for the wreck the truly entitled made of our economy.

Holly Sklar is co-author of "A Just Minimum Wage: Good for Workers, Business and Our Future" (www.letjusticeroll.org) and "Raise the Floor: Wages and Policies That Work for All of Us."

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Obama reverses Bush anti-labor orders, including project labor agreements

WASHINGTON (PAI)-- Reversing yet another GOP Bush regime anti-worker action, President Barack Obama (D) reinstated use of project labor agreements for all federally funded construction.

His Feb. 6 move means federal agencies contracting to build roads, highways, bridges and to retrofit buildings must consider PLAs to promote efficiency and cost savings and -- when they do -- negotiate agreements setting the standards for the projects, including prevailing wages, measures to guarantee smooth construction and settlement of disputes and other worker guarantees.

Obama's pro-PLA executive order reverses the PLA ban by anti-worker GOP President George W. Bush four years before. Obama's move could have an immediate impact. That's because the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act -- otherwise known as the stimulus bill -- includes at least \$150 billion in construction,

with almost one-third of that ready to go when Obama signs it before Feb. 20.

PLAs "are efficient, save money and promote safety and labor standards," the Teamsters said in publicizing Obama's decision. "This is yet another reason for working families to be grateful we have a champion in the White House," union President James Hoffa said. "Project labor agreements are a win-win for everyone involved. Contractors get highly trained, skilled labor with fixed costs, and workers are fairly compensated with their rights and safety protected."

Besides the Wilson Bridge, PLAs have been used for major projects ranging from the Grand Coulee Dam during the New Deal to O'Hare Airport in Chicago.

They can also cover smaller projects. In one irony about a decade ago, Orange County in upstate New York -- then run by GOP conservatives -- nego-

tiated a PLA with local unions for the multimillion-dollar roof replacement at its county government center. A few miles away, the Air Force refused a PLA for upgrading Stewart Airport, then an Air National Guard base. The government center PLA worked. The Stewart work, with no PLA, suffered from delays, shady subcontractors and a big cost

overrun.

Feb 6's PLA action follows Obama's three executive orders the week before that reversed a trio of Bush-era orders governing the way federal contractors deal with union workers. The new orders:

* Require federal service contractors to offer jobs to current workers when contracts change.

* Reverse a Bush order requiring federal contractors to post notice that workers can limit financial support of unions serving as their exclusive bargaining representatives.

* Prevent federal contractors from being reimbursed for expenses meant to influence workers deciding whether to form a union and engage in collective bargaining.



Duluth Building & Construction Trades Council President Craig Olson, left, and Brian Ryks, Executive Director of the Duluth Airport Authority, confirmed their Project Labor Agreement for the "shovel-ready" \$65 million rebuild of the Duluth International Airport terminal. "We still need \$4.9 million in funding from the state to go along with federal funding," said Olson. "It's going to be tough to get but we're hoping the stimulus package will help legislators and Governor Pawlenty approve this important regional aviation infrastructure project." (Submitted photo)

Bush leaves with 7.6% jobless

By Mark Gruenberg, PAI Staff Writer

WASHINGTON (PAI)--The 8-year White House reign of anti-worker Republican George W. Bush ended in January with misery for millions: The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported the nation's jobless rate climbed to 7.6% and the number of unemployed leaped by 508,000 in one month, to 11.616 million.

The data showed joblessness rose 0.4% since December. But more importantly, in the midst of the second Bush crash, the jobless rate was 90% above the 4% rate in Jan. 2001 that Bush inherited from Democratic President William Clinton. The number of unemployed in Jan. 2009 was 95% above the 5.956 million jobless eight years ago.

Besides the half a million people who joined the jobless legions in January, a separate survey showed firms shed 598,000 jobs, on top of 580,000 the month before.

And 2.65 million people have been jobless for at least half a year, almost double the number of long-term jobless last January.

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