

LABOR WORLD

An Injury to One is an Injury to All!
WEDNESDAY VOL. 114
JANUARY 21, 2009 NO. 14



Duluth's Dr. Martin Luther King Day March began under warm temperatures and hope for the future for the first time in many years Monday morning.

Employee Free Choice about the economy, not labor law

By Mark Gruenberg, PAI Staff Writer

Stepping up their drive for the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), organized labor and a lengthening list of allies rolled out a large campaign for the bill at a Jan. 13 press conference, while also taking time to refute corporate lies about it.

Led by African-American and Hispanic-American organizations, the drive will mobilize members of churches, consumer groups, civil rights groups and environmental groups to push Congress to enact the bill, labor's #1 legislative priority.

The legislation's two key goals are to restore the right to organize, through majority sign-up of union authorization cards, and the right to bargain collectively to a positive result, by mandatory arbitration to reach first contracts if needed. Those would help revive the economy, speakers said.

EFCA would not only write majority sign-up into labor law, with workers rather than bosses choosing it, but would also impose heftier fines for labor law breakers, order the National Labor Relations Board to get court injunctions against flagrant violators, and mandate binding arbitration for a first contract if the workers' union and the bosses can't agree within 120 days.

The campaign's theme, however, is economics, not labor law. Speakers, including AFL-CIO Legislative Director Bill Samuel, Center for Economic Policy Research Director Dean Baker, American Rights at Work President David Bonior, and Wade Henderson, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR), said giving workers organizing and bargaining power raises their standards of living, which in turn injects more money into workers' pockets -- and the recession-hit economy.

When the law passes and the long decline in unionization stops, workers 'will have increased bargaining power, higher living standards, more health care, better pension benefits and higher wages,' Baker said.

Augmenting the ground troops will be a new \$3 million round of pro-worker ads to air on national cable television networks, as well as on news talk shows, said Mary Beth Maxwell, executive director of American Rights at Work, which assembled the coalition (youtube.com/watch?v=Hdq5FKyVUwY and

See *Employee Free Choice...page 5*

Pawlenty's proposals will prolong recession

By Barb Kucera, editor
www.workdayminnesota.org

ST. PAUL - Governor Tim Pawlenty's proposals to provide more tax breaks for business and freeze workers' wages will prolong the current economic recession, Minnesota union leaders said. They called on lawmakers to enact fair taxes and institute other measures to stimulate the economy and maintain good public services.

In his annual State of the State address Jan. 15th, Pawlenty outlined some of his plans for dealing with a projected \$5 billion deficit in the state's two-year budget. His proposals included several tax breaks for businesses -- such as cutting the state's business tax rate in half -- and a wage freeze for state employees and any entities that receive state money.

Minnesota AFL-CIO President Ray Waldron called Pawlenty's plans "terrible."

"It's a cold day outside and if you're a worker it's even colder," Waldron said. "The governor wants to freeze our wages, give businesses a tax break and he's still trying to cut his way to economic growth."

Wayne Cox, executive director of Minnesota Citizens for Tax Justice, said the governor's plans appear to be a rehash of the Bush administration's approach to the economy.

"Pawlenty proposed ideas such as expansion of the discredited JobZ program and various other business tax cuts of the type that marked the dismal national performance of the

last eight years in Washington," Cox said. "These proposals would heighten Minnesota's projected budget deficit."

"Ironically, Pawlenty's approach is also a blueprint for significant new job loss in Minnesota. If he succeeds, Pawlenty will pile public sector job loss onto private sector job loss, heightening Minnesota's recession. Tens of thousands of public sector pay checks of teachers, police and fire officers and health care workers will disappear from Main Street, adding further stress to Main Street businesses."

Wage freeze would violate state employee contracts

To implement a wage freeze, the Legislature would need to pass legislation changing the contracts already negotiated with AFSCME, MAPE and other state employee unions.

"Union wages and benefits are not the cause of the budget deficit," said Eliot Seide, director of AFSCME Council 5, which represents 43,000 public and non-profit workers in Minnesota, including 19,000 state employees. "If the governor cut all state employees, it would reduce Minnesota's budget by only 4 percent."

"Like most Minnesotans, public employees live paycheck to paycheck," says AFSCME Council 5 President Mike Buesing. "By freezing our wages, the governor is freezing our spending, which fuels economic recovery. Our wages and job security should be negotiated, not mandated."

"Our public sector work-

force is one of the leanest and most productive in the nation," explains Seide. "We welcome the opportunity to work with any public employer to provide even better services at a lower price."

Concerns about education

In his speech, Pawlenty said he would protect K-12 education from funding cuts, but wanted changes in the way teachers are paid and districts are funded.

"We are pleased to hear that the governor understands and agrees with us that education funding must be increased, even in these economic times," said Tom Dooher, president of Education Minnesota, which represents 70,000 educators across the state. "We don't agree with the way the governor wants to distribute the increase. And we certainly don't agree that our members should have to give up their collective bargaining rights to get it."

"As he has done before, the governor proposes to use experimental programs that distract from or nibble around the edges of the problem: a broken education funding system."

"Additionally, today he spoke of extreme measures such as eliminating teachers' right to strike, getting rid of the traditional steps-and-lanes salary schedule, and freezing any pay increase except for those provided under his 'Q Comp' system. The governor's speech made no mention of any new money to meet other school cost increases, or fund any other programs to bolster student achievement."

"Education Minnesota's goal is to zero in on the fundamental issues that will close the achievement gap and allow every Minnesota student to receive a world-class education: small class sizes, which will allow for more individual attention for students; well-qualified teachers in every classroom; and up-to-date materials for every student."

"To do that, the state needs a school funding system that is equitable, sustainable, predictable and sufficient."

Dec. jobless at 11.1 M, 7.2%

By Mark Gruenberg, PAI Staff Writer

WASHINGTON (PAI)—The nation's unemployment rate leaped by 0.4% in December, finishing 2008 at 7.2%, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported. The number of jobless workers rose by 632,000, to 11.108 million, while a separate survey showed businesses shed 524,000 jobs in one month.

The dismal figures showed the second Bush crash is far worse than the first, and the worst since the Reagan recession of 1981-82. President-elect Barack Obama (D) used the numbers to argue that without immediate congressional passage of a huge economic stimulus bill he is crafting, the jobless rate could rise into double-digit territory -- and stay there.

The figures under Bush contrast with those he inherited when he took office in Jan. 2001. That month, in the last unemployment figures gathered under Democratic President Bill Clinton, the jobless rate was 4% and there were 5.956 million unemployed. Now the rate is 80% higher and the number of jobless is up by 86.5%.

There were job losses across the board. Factories' long slide in jobs sped up in December, as they shed 149,000 workers, and slid below 13 million overall, to 12.98 million. Almost 4 million factory workers have lost their jobs since 1999, and half of them are well-paying union jobs, says the AFL-CIO Industrial Unions Council. Most of the losses are due to subsidized foreign imports, it adds.

Construction shed another 101,000 jobs in December, down

See *Jobless at 7.2%...page 4*

Legislators to hold town meeting Feb. 7

Duluth legislators Senator Yvonne Prettner Solon and Reps. Tom Huntley and Roger Reinert will host a town hall meeting in Duluth on Saturday, Feb. 7. The meeting will be held from 10 a.m. to noon in the DECC French River Room. "I urge citizens to attend our town meetings and stay involved in the political process," said Prettner Solon. "People hold the power to make a difference in state government."

She said the meetings are designed as listening and learning sessions so citizen's ideas on the state budget and how to make government work more efficiently can be aired and brought back to St. Paul.

Labor World annual meeting

Labor World Inc. will hold its annual meeting at 6:00 p.m. Thurs., Feb. 12, in the Duluth Labor Temple's Freeman Hall.

Shareholders in the paper are asked to send the names of their delegates to Labor World, Room 110, 2002 London Rd, Duluth, MN 55812 as soon as possible. They can be faxed to 724-1413, or emailed to laborworld@qwestoffice.net. Call 728-4469 if you need further information.

There will be an open election for five seats on the Board of Directors. Candidates must be members of a union affiliated with the Duluth AFL-CIO Central Labor Body and credentialed delegates to the annual meeting from their local union. Board positions are for two years. The Board meets four times a year prior to Central Body meetings on the second Thursdays in February, June, September, and December.

This quarter's meeting will immediately follow the annual meeting and will include an election of officers.

The Labor World's 2008 financial report, as well as a discussion of the operations of the paper, will be part of the business of the annual meeting.

Retreat for union women

Minnesota women active in their unions – and those interested in getting active – will learn new skills at the Minnesota Union Women's Leadership Retreat April 22-24, 2009. It will be held April 22 to 24 at Ruttger's Bay Lake Lodge near Brainerd.

Cost is \$335 (double occupancy) or \$399 (single) and includes the conference fee, materials, lodging for two nights and all meals and breaks. The deadline to register is March 9.

The event is sponsored by the University of Minnesota Labor Education Service in coordination with women from a variety of unions across Minnesota. A copy of the conference brochure is at www.workdayminnesota.org. For a printed brochure or information, contact LES, 612-624-5020, e-mail les@csom.umn.edu.

Unions interested in helping to sponsor the retreat also are encouraged to contact LES.

I.U.O.E. Local 70

Monthly Arrowhead Regional Meeting

Tuesday, Feb. 10, 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, Feb. 3, 1:00 p.m.

Larry's Cafe & Coneys (Hermantown)

Labor Temple Association Annual Shareholders Meeting

The Annual Shareholders Meeting for the Duluth Labor Temple Association will be held Thursday, Jan. 29 at 1:30 p.m. in the Labor Temple's Judge Gerald Heaney Chambers. The meeting is open only to Labor Temple Association stockholders. The financial books will be reviewed and an election of officers will take place.

A PowerPoint presentation on the state budget will start the town hall meeting and be the focus of the meeting's discussion. The state faces a \$4.8 billion deficit for the coming two-year budget period.

"We have a lot of work to do with the budget and we want to hear ideas from constituents on how to solve the problem," Prettner Solon said. "We need insight and ideas from the people we represent."

Minnesota is facing its most serious and long-lasting recession since World War II. State economist Tom Stinson says we have already lost 33,000 jobs and can expect to lose another 77,000 during this recession. Compare that to job losses of 55,000 in 2001 and 10,000 in 1990-91's recession.

"We need to create jobs and get Minnesotans back to work if we are going to pull out of this recession anytime soon," Sen. Prettner Solon said. "I encourage everyone with ideas, comments or concerns about the state's budget to attend this town hall meeting on Feb. 7."

Sen. Prettner Solon's office can be contacted at 651-296-4188, yvonneps@senate.mn.

Citizens in Action Sat.

Citizens In Action training is this Saturday, Jan. 24 at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Duluth, 835 West College St., 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Senator Tarryl Clark (DFL-St. Cloud), Assistant Majority Leader of the Minnesota Senate, will open the training at 9:30 a.m. Workshops will give steps for citizen involvement, finding coalition partners, and the changing face of communication, discrimination, education, health care, the environment, housing and public safety. A roundtable conversation with elected officials follows lunch. The day ends with Virginia City Councilor Nevada Littlewolf's speech.

Same day registration is available. For info contact Rosie Loeffler-Kemp, 722-8557, rkemp@cleanwater.org.

IBEW 31 & 242 Retirees' Luncheon

Tues., Jan. 27

1:00 p.m.

Pickwick

Members & Their Guests Welcome!

Primary election for Superior city council Feb. 17

Superior, Wisconsin will have city council and school board elections this spring, but only one race will need to be contested in the Primary Election which will be held Tuesday, Feb. 17.

Four candidates are vying for the City Council District 8 seat. They are Mike Herrick, Dan O'Neill, Brent Fennessey, and Ed Gallagher. The top two will advance to the Tuesday, April 7 General Election.

District 8 Councilor Nick Milroy was elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly from District 73 in last fall's election, replacing the retired Rep. Frank Boyle.

The Superior Federation of Labor will hold a District 8 screening for their delegates on Wednesday, Feb. 4 at 6:00 p.m. at the Superior Public Library prior to their regular monthly meeting. Screenings for other races and a public forum will also be held prior to the General Election but dates and places have not been set yet.

This being an odd-numbered year, all even-numbered of the ten Superior City Council seats are up for election.

In District 2 incumbent Tom Bridge will be challenged by Marty Curtiss in the General Election.

In District 4 incumbent Jackie Stenberg faces Gregory Mertzig.

In District 6 incumbent Chuck Hendry is running unopposed.

In District 10 incumbent Esther Dalbec will face Justin Bisted.

In Superior School Board contests, four candidates are vying for three positions. All school board seats are at-large.

Incumbents Len Albrecht and Bonnie Baker will have Joshua Christie and Curt Vanderstelt joining them in the April 7th school board races.

In another April 7 contest District Attorney Dan Blank and Assistant District Attorney Kelly Thimm will compete for a judgeship currently held by Judge Michael Lucci.

17th Annual Construction Safety Day

Tuesday, February 10, 2009

Duluth Entertainment & Convention Center

Sponsored by: AGC of Minnesota and Duluth Builders Exchange

This year we are offering certifications in:

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All classes begin 7 am, OSHA ends 5:30 pm

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*Commercial Drivers

*Confined Space

*CPR

*Drug and Alcohol Awareness

*Earth Moving Equipment

*First Aid

*Hazard Communication

*Jobsite Security

*Managing the Workforce

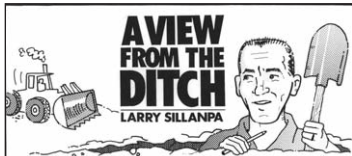
*Minnesota Construction Fatalities 2008

*Preparing for OSHA Inspections

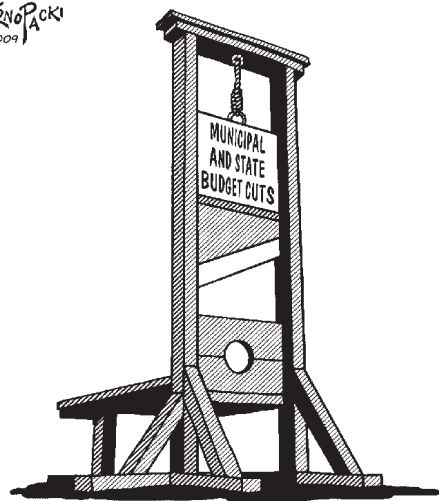
*Stormwater Rules & Hazardous Spills

*Underground Utility Safety

For registration information, visit www.agcmn.org, call 1-800-552-7670



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SHARED SACRIFICE

This had to be the best Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday yet. Us old folks remember when he was alive, before he was murdered, but think off all the folks that have been born since April 4, 1968.

Think of all the folks that have been honoring him since MLK Day became a national holiday in 1986. That's 22 years ago or better. For many who have honored him on his day, he's someone from a long time ago in America's history, even though too many of the human rights issues he championed haven't been resolved. His efforts have been much appreciated for the many who have marched, rallied, or prayed in his honor, but they seem relegated to a time long ago. Put 1968 in the context of your own life.

But this year MLK Day was jubilation for our African-American sisters and brothers and all who love King's work and legacy. A new hero for
See Ditchview, MN...page 6

Point of View

Selling off Comfort Systems good for a few, not the public

by Alan Netland, *President, AFSCME Local 66 and Duluth AFL-CIO Central Labor Body*

In the last issue of this paper I suggested that Duluth Mayor Don Ness might forego his "old" style of dealing with our unions and try a "new" way of thinking, more along the lines used by St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman. Since then, in his State of the City address Mayor Ness suggested that we sell the gas utility. More old style thinking from Mayor Ness. Conservatives have been pushing this idea for decades.

Those of us in public sector unions particularly understand that ideas such as this proposed sale of a public asset or proposals to privatize services performed by public employees will become more prevalent in the coming months and perhaps years. The Chamber of Commerce, conservatives, and right wingers in general, will have to target local and state government services to continue to promote their anti-union and anti-government agendas. With Bush and the right wingers effectively booted out of office, they have no audience to promote their ideas on a national level. President Obama and the Congress are pro-union and for public services.

So we will take this proposal to sell the gas utility in stride. We will demand a fair hearing and examine who would benefit from this proposed sale. And we will ask the hard questions that others will choose to ignore or gloss over.

Lets look at the proponents. Arend Sandbulte is the former president, chairman and CEO of Minnesota Power. He was the chair of Mayor Ness campaign election committee. When have you heard of a millionaire directly involved in a local government election? How many thousands (or likely tens of thousands) of shares of stock does he still own of Minnesota Power (now Allete)? Wouldn't he personally profit if Allete bought the Duluth gas utility?

How about Mayor Ness? Have any offers or assurances been made by this or any other corporation about future employment opportunities for him in consideration of his efforts to promote their interests?? The meager salary of the mayor will make it difficult to build up college funds for children (currently two) in their one income family.

The Duluth Chamber of Commerce has demonstrated their bias already in supporting this proposal and we remember their funding of the anti-union ads attacking Senator Franken last year. No surprise here.

We will ask the councilors and citizens to examine the current level of services they receive from our utility and to carefully scrutinize promises and figures presented by so-called experts in the coming months. (Remember the Aquarium?)

And we will bring in examples from other jurisdictions from around the country where the attempts to privatize public services may serve some individual interests well, but not so for the general public. Stay tuned.

This Day In History
www.workdayminnesota.org
January 21, 1924
Tens of thousands of people gathered in Chicago and New York to mourn the death of Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin.

If Pawlenty's policy fails, it's time for an economic strike

Editor:

As you read this, Bush and Cheney have been relegated to the dung pile of history. Good riddance and not one minute too soon. But in Minnesota, we have a governor who would like to be the Republican-endorsed candidate for president in 2012. Pawlenty's claim to national fame is his no tax pledge, and another \$5+ billion budget deficit.

When Bill Clinton was president, after 12 years of Bush Senior and Reagan, he recognized that a tax increase was necessary to reverse the years of deficits from Reagan's tax cuts. The Repubs under Newt Gingrich refused and a showdown resulted in a government shutdown, with Gingrich and his GOP cronies taking the blame. Eventually, they caved from the heat, Clinton and the Dems prevailed, and when he left office, Clinton left Bush the Lesser a budget surplus and a robust economy.

When Reagan was elected in 1979, he got significant tax cuts for the rich passed (trickle-down Reaganomics). In northern Minnesota mines shutdown, others cut employment and hours, and unemployment insurance benefits ran out for many. Gov. Perpich got taxes raised in the early 1980s and we began to see a turn around in employment. Govs Perpich and Carlson left the state in great financial shape. So good, in fact, that we could elect a "rassler" with no political experience as governor, and between Ventura and Pawlenty we have experienced budget shortfalls the past five years.

In 2003, the Duluth AFL-CIO Central Labor Body passed a resolution with 3 criteria for balancing the 2004-05 deficit:

1. All Minnesotans need to share fairly in solving the problem -- not just students, the elderly, working families, children, rural communities and the poor;

2. A balanced approach of spending cuts, limitations of government growth, and new revenues, so those who benefited most from tax cuts when times were good give something back now that times are bad;

3. All spending must be on the table when we make cuts, including corporate tax loopholes and special tax breaks that do not benefit all Minnesotans.

A December 30, 2008 *Los Angeles Times* editorial stated: "The no-tax pledge, or, more formally, the Taxpayers Protection Pledge - originated and monitored by republican lobbyist Grover Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform - blindly promotes one policy position over the interests of the economy and even taxpayers. It's the wrong pledge...Pledging to protect the economic health and general welfare of California (read "Minnesota") should take precedence over the candidate ratings and scorecards put out by anti-tax groups."

The majority in both the Minnesota House and Senate is DFL. After five years of budget deficits only balanced by fee increases, cuts to education from K-12 through higher education, cuts in Health and Human Services, and tax shifts to property owners via unallotments, it is time to revisit labor's last resort in negotiations - the economic strike.

If Governor Pawlenty's ideological tax policy refuses to "protect the economic health and general welfare" of Minnesota, then we need to take the same hard-nosed position as did President Clinton and Democrats nationally. The Minnesota DFL party should propose and pass a responsible budget based on the same three principles adopted by the Duluth Central Labor Body in 2003. If Governor Pawlenty refuses and his veto is not overridden, then Minnesota government should shut down, and let the blame for the strike fall where it may.

George A.Sundstrom, a retired Union Sheet Metal Worker

"Quote, Unquote"

"Some thought that our country didn't have a responsibility to do anything...that people would be better off left to their own devices and the whims of the market... But President Roosevelt believed deeply that the freedom to pursue our own individual dreams is made possible by the promise that, if fate causes us to stumble or fall, our larger American family will be there to lift us up."

~Sen. Barack Obama in a speech just months after being elected to the U.S. Senate from Illinois, looking back on the Great Depression and the legacy of President F.D. Roosevelt.

~NOTICE~
Next issues of Labor World:
Feb 4, 18;
March 4, 18; April 1, 22;
May 6, 20; June 3, 24;
July 8, 22; Aug. 5, 19;
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Jobless at 7.2%...from page 1

to 6.833 million. The number of unemployed construction workers is 1.522 million and the sector's jobless rate is 15.9%.

Even service-providing industries lost jobs, except for health care. It added 22,000 jobs, but services as a whole shed 273,000.

Workers without jobs are off longer too. The agency said 40.4% of all unemployed workers in December had been jobless at least 15 weeks, and 23.2% had been jobless for at least half a year. In Dec. 2007, the month economists say the latest Bush crash started, one-third of workers were jobless for at least four months and 17.5% were out for at least 27 weeks.

A higher share of workers is also toiling in part-time jobs even when they want full-time work. In December, there were 8 million such involuntary part-timers, 3.4 million more than a year before. And overall share of unemployed, underemployed and discouraged workers was 13.5% -- one of every 7.4. That's up 0.9% in one month, and almost 5 percentage points from Dec. 2007.

Four seekers for every job

The Bureau of Labor Statistics Jan. 13 released data showing there were 3.8 job seekers for every job in November 2008, up from 3.4 per job in October and from 1.8 per job a year earlier.

"It's getting harder to find employment than to be accepted at some elite universities," said EPI economist Heidi Shierholz. "Seeing nearly four unemployed workers for every opening is a sobering indicator of how difficult it is to find a job in today's weak market. With so few job openings it is easy to understand why nearly a quarter of unemployed workers have been out of a job for over six months."

Union leaders back stimulus bill

WASHINGTON (PAI)-- Union leaders generally backed the \$825 billion economic stimulus bill that House Democrats unveiled Jan. 15. Indeed, the sole complaint was that it was too small, especially on infrastructure projects.

The measure, which is quickly expected to pass the Democratic-run House, faces Republican opposition on both sides of Capitol Hill. "Oh. My. God," was the reaction of House Minority Leader John Boehner, R-Ohio, when he saw it. He complained it had too many pork-barrel projects and not enough business tax cuts.

Democratic President-elect Barack Obama wants lawmakers to quickly pass the measure to help stop the bleeding in the economy. Even with the jobs it creates, he warned, joblessness could rise to 8% this year, from 7.2% in December. Without it, he said unemployment would be in double-digit percentages. Key features which drew

union leaders' support include more money to states to help pay for Medicaid -- which cares for workers and their families who lose their jobs and health insurance -- money for school rebuilding, a down payment on modernizing the health care system, and significant spending on rebuilding the nation's roads, bridges, highways, mass transit and airports.

That's the area where Steel Workers President Leo Gerard, said Obama and the Democrats aren't spending enough, especially since the current Bush recession, the worst since at least 1982, has already run for a year and is expected to last at least through 2009 if not afterwards. Citing a study from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Gerard said every billion dollars of stimulus spending would not only create new construction jobs-- estimates are 47,000 per billion dollars -- but 18,000 new factory jobs.

Those workers make the steel, concrete, rubber, glass "and all those other goods that go into infrastructure," he said.

The report said at least 2.6 million new jobs could be created by increased spending in a "high-end" scenario of \$148 billion per year. Manufacturing in particular would benefit from such an infrastructure stimulus, seeing an increase of 252,000 jobs nationally. Domestically sourcing all manufactured materials in the new infrastructure investment would increase manufacturing job creation by one-third.

"The \$145.7 billion proposed funding increase for education would give states an extraordinary boost they desperately need to preserve and strengthen pre-K through 12th-grade education, child care and higher education," said American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten in a statement. She

called the education dollars "significant and will help prevent any further draconian cuts at the state-level. assistance and support needed to boost our economy and revitalize our schools" at the same time.

AFSCME President Gerald McEntee said that "with more than 11 million Americans out of work and millions more at risk of losing their jobs. Congress needs to move to jump-start the economy right now, and that must include major help for states and localities being forced to cut many of the vital public services the American people rely on in times of economic crisis. This is not the time to make service cuts that will only make the task of recovery more difficult."

Aid to state and local governments are a big part of the stimulus package.

Minnesota House of Representatives Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher (DFL-Mpls) made it clear to her federal representation that the state would like to see some of the potential stimulus package in the state coffers.

"We typically end up on the short end of the stick on a lot of these things coming from the federal government," she said.

Kelliher said she's got her work cut out in trying to better understand the proposed legislation, especially the part of the package directed toward job retention. Her concern is that the legislature has a say over any money coming into the state from the federal government, and that it not just become a "receptacle for the (Republican Gov. Tim Pawlenty) administration."

"We're going to make sure we know what the facts are in terms of when the money comes into the state, and how it can best help the recovery process for Minnesotans."



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Twelve unions hold "unity meeting"

WASHINGTON (PAI)-- Prodded by transition team officials for President-Elect Barack Obama, 12 union presidents held an "unity" meeting Jan. 7 in Washington to try to figure out how the labor movement can speak with one voice, not three. They emerged pledging "broad participation" in the effort, but no specifics.

In attendance at the session, called by former House Democratic Whip David Bonior, chair of American Rights at Work, were presidents of five of Change to Win's seven unions, six of the 56 AFL-CIO unions, and new National Education Association President Dennis Van Roekel. His 3.2 million-member union is the nation's largest.

A joint statement said: "The

goal is to create a unified labor movement that can speak and act nationally on the critical issues facing working Americans." It added that "while we represent the largest unions, we recognize unity requires broad participation."

Reunification at the top of organized labor would ratify what has, to some extent, happened on the ground since Change To Win split from the AFL-CIO in 2005: Close cooperation in elections and legislation. There have been some state-level splits, notably in Michigan and Minnesota. And the Service Employees and AFSCME have battled over organizing home health care workers in several states.

Attending the meeting, besides Bonior and Van Roekel, were AFL-CIO member union presidents Larry Cohen (Communications Workers), Leo Gerard (Steel Workers), Ron Gettelfinger (Auto Workers), Gerald McEntee (AFSCME), Ed Hill (IBEW) and Randi Weingarten (Teachers).

Change to Win presidents attending were Joe Hansen (United Food and Commercial Workers), James Hoffa (Teamsters), Terry O'Sullivan (Laborers), Bruce Raynor (UNITE HERE) and Andy Stern (Service Employees).

The statement also said AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney and Change to Win

Chair Anna Burger joined the session, contradicting news reports that specifically said no AFL-CIO officers attended.

The New York Times reported Bonior would arrange future meetings to try to push the unity effort. Weingarten told the paper "there was a real sense of commitment to unifying our movement again," ending the split that created Change to Win. Her predecessor, Ed McElroy, carried on behind-the-scenes reunification efforts during his term as AFT chief, according to retired CWA President Morton Bahr. And IBEW and UFCW have kept in close touch, with Hansen speaking at IBEW's 2006 convention.

Other topics included mobilization for labor's legislative agenda -- headed by the Employee Free Choice Act -- and the structure of the revised labor movement.

Reports differed on whether they discussed who should succeed Sweeney, who will be 74 by the September AFL-CIO convention in Pittsburgh. Names mentioned but unconfirmed, include Cohen, O'Sullivan and AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard L. Trumka. Past reports noted if Trumka wins, the Teamsters would not rejoin the AFL-CIO. Trumka strongly supported the Teamsters president whom Hoffa unseated, the late Ron Carey.

Employee Free Choice Act is about economics...from page 1

and youtube.com/watch?v=CijNp_bqNsM).

Unions and their allies are concentrating on 15-16 key states whose senators, Democratic and especially Republican, hold the key to overcoming a planned GOP filibuster against the law.

Samuel expects the Democratic-run House to easily pass the legislation, with a larger majority than in the 110th Congress. The problem is in the Senate, where the Republicans need only 41 votes to keep a filibuster going and thus talk the bill to death. The GOP is "getting incredible pressure" from business against it, speakers said.

Speakers spent part of the session educating media members against lies from business about the EFCA, notably the claim it would "destroy the secret ballot" in union recognition elections -- a claim many media outlets swallow. The speakers noted unionists could still choose the election option, or majority sign-up, also known as card-check. Unionists in the field must educate the public, too, they said. That choice would be up to the workers, not the bosses, under the bill, they said.

Samuel said backers now count 60 votes to stop the GOP talkathon, including Senate co-sponsor Arlen Specter, R-Pa. But they want to clear that barrier with plenty to spare and they have to do so in the face of a multi-million dollar business ad campaign against it. And there are some doubtful Democrats.

"It will not be an easy lift," Henderson said of the effort to get the bill through the Senate.

Besides the Leadership Conference, other groups in the pro-worker campaign include the National Consumers League, the NAACP, La Raza Unida, People for the American Way, the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, the National Partnership for Women and Families, Human Rights Watch, the Center for American Progress, the Americans for Democratic Action, and Interfaith Worker Justice.

Henderson said the law would particularly benefit minority and female workers, who are last-hired, first-fired and especially vulnerable in the recession, and who make far more when they're unionized than when they're not.

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Steve O'Neil

County Commissioner

St. Louis County District 2



Thank you for supporting me during my first term as county commissioner. With others, I helped formulate and begin implementing a comprehensive ten year plan to reduce homelessness in our county. Reducing homelessness lowers costs for emergency room visits, detox services, and police, court, and jail costs. I worked to protect vital services to seniors, veterans, children, and people with disabilities and helped build cooperation in services and purchases with cities and townships and with Bois Forte and Fond du Lac Reservations.

I want to take this opportunity to remind you that county government affects us all. I am available to citizens in one-on-one conversations, in meetings, and by phone and email. Please contact me with questions or ideas you have about county services, programs, or offices.

Prepared and paid for by the O'Neil Volunteer Committee, Sharon Lund, Treasurer

Ditchview, MN ...from page 3

Black people has emerged and was inaugurated the day after MLK Day. We're talking poetic justice here, and the shaking off of yokes. We're talking children having a living, breathing person they can look for and to. Having a young, African American President should bring us closer to "Free at last" from prejudice. Barack Obama does not carry a body of work that can bring rejoicing, but he brings hope. And for that we can rejoice. Two men, far apart, yet so close together this week. Two men to lift us all. Martin Luther King, Jr. has waited a long time for this kind of help.

The MLK Day March in Duluth is usually held in bitterly cold weather like we had last week. It was almost a balmy day for marchers Monday and their spirits were lifted. Things are changing for the better. Obama's name was being shouted on Lake Ave. before the march began. Many had undoubtedly been watching the inauguration concert the day before on television. It was pretty spectacular. Vice President Joe Biden's speech was Labor Day worthy without his ever using the word "union."

I teared up once when they played the film clip of Marian Anderson singing on those steps in 1939 at Eleanor Roosevelt's invitation after being denied the Constitution Hall stage by the Daughters of the American Revolution. They should have played that whole film clip.

I don't remember specifically what Obama said in his message. It was getting late and his inspiring words are all beginning to sound sermonically similar. It's time to implement the game plan and start pouring some concrete. We've talked and listened enough, unfortunately it's only begun. But this week is *Happy New President!* It's a fun greeting for this month and hopefully will continue to be for eight wonderful years for us long-suffering Americans, and people worldwide.

Yvonne Harvey named to DTA Board

Yvonne Harvey was seated as a member of the Duluth Transit Authority Board of Directors at their December meeting. Appointed by Mayor Don Ness, she is the District 5 representative as defined by city council districts.

Harvey is Director of the AFL-CIO Community Services Activities Program, a joint venture of the Duluth AFL-CIO Central Labor Body and the United Way of Greater Duluth. She has held that post since 2002, after leaving her employment as a St. Louis Co.

social worker where she was an AFSCME Local 66 member. She is a member of AFSCME Local 3558 in her current job, and is treasurer of her union.

"I'm really excited to serve on the DTA Board," she said. "It's a really good group of people who care about our community." Harvey said many of the families she deals with in her job are dependent upon public transportation and she can bring their perspective to the board.

"This is an exciting time for public transportation," she

says. "Ridership is up because of the cost of gas, and public transportation fits nicely with ideas of a green economy and protecting our environment. We're excited about hybrid buses and the possibility of interacting with proposed light rail systems."

Harvey also serves on the Duluth Workforce Council board and the Lake Superior Area Labor Management Association (LSALMA). She is vice president of Citizens Federation and chairs the St. Louis County Emergency Food and Shelter Board.

Other members of the DTA Board of Directors are President Aaron Bransky, VP Dennis Birchland, Sec./Treas. Walter Kramer, Alex Livadaros, who is a member of AFSCME Local 66 at WLSSD, Melanie Hendrickson, Sarah Chambers, Lewis Martin, and Richard Towey. All are Duluthians but Martin, the Superior representative.

Workers at the Duluth Transit Authority are represented by Teamsters Local 346.

You can find out more at www.duluthtransit.com.

Do you volunteer, donate?

Yvonne Harvey has decided it is time to start compiling labor's donations to the community.

"No matter where I go or who I talk to, I'm always finding out about how union members are giving to their community," she said. "It's about time to start figuring out just how much that amounts to because I know it is a lot."

If you volunteer to any organizations or efforts, or make donations, financial or otherwise, to organizations or efforts, Yvonne would like to hear from you. She can be reached at 728-1779 or yharvey@unitedwayduluth.org

UCAN training in Feb.

The Duluth AFL-CIO Community Services Program will conduct Union Community Activist Network (UCAN) training all day Monday, Feb. 16, and the evenings of Feb. 17 and 18. The training is open to anyone interested--union or non-union. Community Services Director Yvonne Harvey said participants will gain a sense of pride, unity and commitment to labor issues through the training.

A graduation banquet will be Thursday, March 20 beginning at 6 p.m. at the Holiday Inn.

A \$35 registration fee covers materials, refreshments and a graduation banquet in the spring, part of the Duluth AFL-CIO Community Services Awards Banquet.


Please RSVP by Feb. 13 to Yvonne at 728-1779.

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

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



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Gary Eckenberg to fill Roger Reinert's city council term

On Jan. 12 Duluth City Councilors elected Gary Eckenberg to fill the at-large seat vacated by Roger Reinert, who was elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives Nov. 4th.

Well versed in government as deputy administrator for St. Louis County, Eckenberg was one of 35 people to file for Reinert's position. He made the top 10 in councilor picks, then the top five and won on the fifth ballot, beating frequent

conservative candidate Becky Hall. While many would characterize Eckenberg as being "left of center" politically, it was conservative councilor Jim Stauber switching his vote from Hall to Eckenberg that decided the contest.

"Five councilors felt they could work with me for a year," Eckenberg said. "This was a council selection, and each councilor had to decide if I would be helpful in moving forward their own ideas, and if

I could contribute to the best interests of our citizens. I'm humbled and thankful that they felt I could be trusted with this appointment."

Eckenberg said his primary purpose in filing for the opening was to see that the position would be "truly open for the fall election, since I will not be a candidate in November. I feel that an at-large council seat is extremely important to the community, and all council hopefuls should be able to compete on an equal footing without the appointed incumbent using that unearned prominence as leverage to an election win."

Before he became an administrator, Eckenberg had been a member of AFSCME Local 66 for over 20 years.

"Gary served on our Local 66 county basic unit negotiating team for a number of years when he was a health department employee," Duluth AFL-CIO Central Labor Body and AFSCME Local 66 President Alan Netland said. "He also helped settle an AFSCME Local 3558 contract at Neighborhood Housing Services a number of years ago under very difficult circumstances as chair of the non-profit's board. We have not had any difficulty working with Gary up to this point as an assistant administrator with the county either. We are hopeful that he will continue to be thoughtful about workers' concerns as he moves into his councilor role in uncertain times."

Eckenberg said it has been suggested that he might be a "swing vote" on the council.



Gary Eckenberg
(Submitted Photo)

"I see my role as trying to understand the positions and sentiments on both sides of the issues, and then be able to explain my thought process and reasoning for my votes to anyone who might ask," was his answer to that assumption.

This will be Eckenberg's second stint as a city council replacement, having served for two years in 2000-2002 filling a District 4 seat vacated when Dale Swapinski was elected to the Minnesota House in District 7A. That seat opened when Rep. Willard Munger passed away.

Eckenberg's new term expires Jan. 4, 2010. Other council seats up this fall include Jim Stauber (at-large), Garry Krause (Dist. 4), and Greg Gilbert (Dist. 2), who has stated he will not run again.

Patrick Boyle, son of former Wisconsin State Rep. Frank Boyle, visited the Duluth AFL-CIO Central Labor Body meeting Jan. 8 and said he is exploring running for Gilbert's seat.

Health reform happening?

...from page 8

of national health care reform since Truman's administration, but he has hopes for this Congress and President-elect Barack Obama. But he said Minnesota can't wait.

Make Health Happen partners include TakeAction Minnesota, AFSCME Council 5, the Children's Defense Fund, Education Minnesota, ISAAH, Minnesota Nurses Association, SEIU Minnesota State Council, and the Minnesota AFL-CIO.

You can learn more at www.makehealthhappen.org.

Many in the labor movement are calling for a Medicare for all, single-payer type of health care system in the U.S. Huntley says he's all for it.

"I'm for single payer and I still will be in thirty years," he said. "In the meantime we have to improve the system we have."

Seide said we can't "let the perfect be the enemy of the good" in trying to achieve our goals.

There are single payer bills in the Congress (HR. 676) and Minnesota Legislature (Sen. John Marty's MN Health Act), along with efforts to reauthorize SCHIP and MinnesotaCare.

About 8.6 million children are uninsured nationwide. A reauthorization of the SCHIP would cover 4 million of them in low-income families.

Blue Green national conf.

On February 4-6, the Blue Green Alliance will coordinate the 2009 Good Jobs, Green Jobs National Conference at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, D.C., uniting more than 2,000 business, labor and environmental advocates to forge an agenda for expanding the green economy.

Building on the successful 2008 Conference in Pittsburgh, the 2009 Conference agenda constitutes a powerful "New Green Deal" for transforming the U.S. economy to create good jobs, increase energy independence, reduce global warming and dramatically expand clean energy and green technology markets. Innovative environmental investments, including energy efficiency, renewable energy and green technologies are considered to be the key to a sustainable economy by coalition partners.

The Good Jobs, Green Jobs National Conference will be the leading forum in 2009 for shaping the national debate about investment in clean energy and green technologies, and for sharing ideas and strategies for a refashioned, green economy.

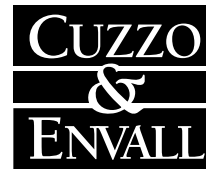
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Campaign seeks to "Make Health Happen" with bill in legislature

On Jan. 14, about the time a press conference was held at Duluth Central High School for a "Make Health Happen" campaign in Minnesota, the U.S. House of Representatives was reauthorizing the Children's Health Insurance Program that President Bush had vetoed twice. In spite of the Great Recession, America is serious about health care reform.

The Central High press conference unveiled the Minnesota Health Security Act which charts a clear path to guaranteed, affordable, health coverage for all Minnesotans starting with children in 2010. The legislation by authors Sen. Tony Lourey (DFL-Kerrick) and Rep. Paul Thissen (DFL-

using 25 percent of their income to pay for health care." Nearly one million Minnesotans spend more than 10 percent of their incomes on health care he said.

Coalition members say that providing coverage for all Minnesotans is especially important during the current recession when working families are losing their jobs and their health insurance.

Skyrocketing health care costs are now the top cause of bankruptcy in the United States and one-half of all home foreclosures are the result of a family being hit by unaffordable medical costs. A report released last year estimated that more than three Minnesotans die

Wanner, who has been teaching for 38 years, said America should be the land of equal opportunity but equal access to health care keeps that from actually occurring.

"We talk about a healthy economy, a healthy environment, and a healthy business climate, but we need a healthy population as well," Wanner said. "Is that student falling

asleep in class because he's tired or ill?"

Huntley said Minnesota has always been the national leader in health care but now ranks behind Massachusetts. We can improve our rating inexpensively by just covering those 77,000 children to start with.

"Most just need one or two visits a year to a pediatrician," Huntley said.

About 1 of every 12 dollars spent by people with health coverage is used to pay for those without coverage who are using health care services, Huntley said.

"We're already paying for everyone in the most inefficient way--the emergency room," Huntley said.

He said there has been talk
See Health reform...page 7



In 38 years as an educator Duluth Federation of Teachers President Frank Wanner has seen a direct correlation between the health of students and their ability to learn.

Minneapolis) is based on the Children's Health Security Act, which successfully passed the Minnesota House in 2007.

Rep. Tom Huntley (DFL-Duluth), a co-sponsor of the bill, was joined at Central by members of AFSCME Council 5, and Frank Wanner, President of the Duluth Federation of Teachers, who support the bill.

A statewide coalition representing more than 350,000 Minnesotans launched the "Make Health Happen" campaign to reform the state's health care system, which now leaves 375,000 state residents - including 77,000 children and 9.1 percent of all residents of the Arrowhead region - without health coverage.

Eliot Seide, AFSCME Council 5 Director, said 29,200 Arrowhead region residents are without health care. He said that's 9 percent of the population here, while the metro area has 7 percent without coverage, and up to 17 percent in north central Minnesota. The state average is 7.2 percent.

"The underinsured number 240,000," Seide said. "They're

each week because they lack health coverage.

Linda Parrot, a Duluth nurse and AFSCME Local 3558 member, said he has had to drop her health insurance at work because it was taking one of her paychecks a month. Now she goes without medical care, just as too many of her friends are doing she said.

Parrot and many others like her are one health care crisis from catastrophe. Yet many critics warn of "socialized" medicine, in spite of the U.S. having the most expensive system in the world but one that delivers poorly. The U.S. is 29th in the world for life expectancy.

Supporters of the Minnesota Health Security Act say we must start by covering all children by 2010, and all adults by 2012.

"Cynics say we can't afford it, but we say we can't afford not to," said Seide. He said the plan will have profound impacts on all aspects of the quality of life in Minnesota, including the economy, our schools, and workforce.

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