Letter Carriers 25th Food Drive is May 13

Local food shelves see 8,223 individuals and distribute 109,017 pounds of food on average every month.

Van Daele asked postal patrons to fill one or more bags with non-perishable, non-expired food and place the bags by their mail boxes by 9 a.m. on Saturday, May 13.

There are food drop off sites for donations as well at Super 1 supermarkets, the Hermantown Federal Credit Union and other sites. HFCU is collecting non-perishable food items at all three branches before Friday, May 12.

Volunteers in Duluth are fed all day at Bernie’s BBQ in back of the Main Post Office (29th Ave. W. below Michigan St.) thanks to the SiebenCarey law firm and more volunteers coordinated by Rachel Loeffler-Kemp and the Community Services Program.

Nationally last year the largest amount ever was collected at over 80 million pounds, worth over $175 million. The total amount of donations picked up over the 25-year history of the food drive is more than 1.5 billion pounds.

“Too many people in this country are going hungry,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “We know this to be true because we see it as we deliver to every address in America at least six days a week.”

Sadly, statistics back that up. Nearly 49 million Americans—1 in 6—are unsure where their next meal is coming from. This includes 13 million children as well as about 6 million seniors over age 60—many of whom live on fixed incomes and often are too embarrassed to ask for help. Many children depend on meals at school during the school year but that ends when they’re off for the summer. The NALC Food Drive fills a huge gap as food shelves get hit hard.

Since 1993, when the national food drive began, letter carriers have collected more than 139 million pounds of food.

See NALC Food...page 2

Area Food Shelf Needs

1. Peaches, pears, fruit cocktail, pineapple, mandarin oranges, dried fruit
2. Chicken noodle & cream of mushroom soups
3. Peanut butter
4. Canned corn, peas, green beans
5. Tuna & Spam
6. Spaghetti, chili, stew
7. Chunky soups
8. Pasta sides & rice-a-roni
9. Pork and beans
10. Brown rice
11. Whole wheat pasta
12. Baby formula

Food Not Needed (due to large inventories)
- Tomato sauce
- Black beans
- Pumpkin
- Cranberries

Workers’ Memorial Day 2017:
A solemn occasion can still be a big success

Workers’ Memorial Day was first observed in Duluth on April 28, 1989. It was the first year that the AFL-CIO recognized the solemn occasion after picking it up from Canada which had been observing a “Workers Day of Mourning” since 1986.

While the sorrow of remembering three local men who lost their lives on the job hurt, the observance in Duluth had never been done better. All three Congressional representatives sent staff to convey their feelings. Four mayors attended. Their were state legislators, county commissioners, city councilors, school board members, many active and retired union members, the Minnesota AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer and community friends, including David Ross, President/CEO of the Duluth Chamber of Commerce. Fire Fighters Local 101’s Honor Guard and Peace Church’s Pastor Kathy Nelson gave reverence, remembrance and solemnity to the day.

This year three workers were remembered here.

Joseph Burch, 53, a member of Boilermakers Local 117, died April 8, 2017 from burns received while working at Fraser Shipyards in Superior on Feb. 6.

Two AFSCME Local 1123 members employed by the City of Two Harbors were remembered.

John Mahady died Sept. 10 1997, in a diving accident while checking the water intake pipe at the city water plant. His union had asked that he be remembered this year.

John E. Harju, a heavy equipment operator for the City of Two Harbors, passed away Jan. 9, this year following a medical incident while at work. His wife, Penny, and son, Eric, attended the observance at the Duluth Labor Temple, including a breakfast and tree planting.

Two Harbors Mayor Chris Swanson was just ready to start his new job as mayor when he was told John Harju had died at work.

“As mayor you know you’re going to get hit with big things – it’s part of the job,” Swanson said in addressing a packed Wellstone Hall. “That was a powerful thing to hear.”

He said he didn’t know Workers’ Memorial Day even existed. “I appreciate all who came down” to observe it he said. “Everyone in Two Harbors will tell you John was an exceptional guy...smiling and waving whether he was in a street sweeper or running a grader.”

Duluth Mayor Emily Larson said one thing that has impressed her as mayor is the 800 people who come to work everyday for the City of Duluth and do the work for its 86,128 citizens. To the families of the three men remembered, two of them city workers, she said.

See Workers...page 7
Central Body screens city council May 11

The Duluth Central Labor Body will jump into this fall’s elections on Thursday, May 11 when they will hold their first screening of candidates.

Duluth City Council candidates interested in seats in districts 2 (precincts 8-13) and 4 (precincts 21-27), and two at-large positions (precincts 1-34) will be screened at 6:00 p.m., Thursday, May 11 in the Duluth Labor Temple’s Wellstone Hall.

Screenings are open to all affiliated union members. Any possible endorsements by the Central Body will be considered by official delegates from affiliated local unions only at the regular monthly Central Body meeting that follows the screenings in Wellstone Hall.

Declared candidates have been notified of the screenings and there appear to be quite a few of them. There could be quite a contest this year with the number of candidates and the number of organizations getting involved in the endorsement process.

Three of the four council positions up for election this year have Central Body incumbents seeking re-election. Barb Rus and Zack Filipovich carry Labor-endorsements as at-large councilors. Current Council President Joel Sipress is running again in District 2 and has a Labor endorsement. Howie Hanson had stated he will not seek re-election in District 4 due to a conflict of interest but may be waffling on that decision.

There are at least six large candidates, two for District 4 and Sipress is as of now unopposed again for District 2. Official candidate filings with the city clerk’s office open on Tuesday, July 5 and close on Tuesday, July 18, 2017.

The Primary Election is Tuesday, September 12, 2017. The General Election is Tuesday, November 7, 2017.

Minority scholarship deadline 6/1

Applications for the 2017-2018 academic year for the Nellie Stone Johnson Scholarship must be postmarked no later than June 1, 2017 to be considered. They are available to minority college, community colleges and/or state universities in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System. To be eligible, an applicant must be a racial minority and a union member or be the child, grandchild, or spouse of a union member.

Scholarships are up to $1,200 for full-time students (12 or more credits undergraduate or 6 credits or more graduate) and up to $500 for part-time students (6-11 credits undergraduate work). Applications and additional information are available at http://www.nelliestone.org or by calling toll free: 866-738-5238.

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Thank you!
Klas Bergman was born in Stockholm in 1942 and says as a boy he always enjoyed stories of Swedes emigrating to Minnesota and politics. He came too, earned a BA in History at Stanford in 1965, and went on to an incredible career as a journalist and press officer for the leading Swedish newspaper, the Swedish Embassy, Christian Science Monitor, Yale, Stanford, World Bank, and United Nations. He has been stationed in Warsaw, Belgrade, Bonn, and Washington DC. But those boyhood stories never left him.

In April, after “four years of hard research and a new respect for serious scholarship” he published “Scandinavians in the State House: How Nordic Immigrants Shaped Minnesota Politics” through the Minnesota Historical Society Press. If you’re wondering about who we are as Minnesotans Klas Bergman’s book is for you.

He was at the UMD Library April 20 to talk about his research, his new book, and Minnesota history and politics.

Swedes, Finns, Danes, Norwegians, and Icelanders came here before Minnesota even became a state in 1858. They came because they were starving, for land, jobs, for political reasons such as being blacklisted for their radical political beliefs, Bergman said. The topography and weather here were a lot like home. A Swedish writer in 1853 called Minnesota “the new Scandinavia.”

German immigrants outnumbered Nordic folks in the early years, but they did not gain as great a political influence because they were too divided by their religion, class, and cultural values Bergman said. By 1905 Swedish immigrants outnumbered Germans. The two World Wars also cut down German influence here.

The Nordic people had spent years being ruled by others so when they came here they wanted to have a say in their affairs. They took up issues that were important to them in leaving home: the death penalty, women’s suffrage, and temperament. They were pro-union. Many of the radicals used temperance halls for their work. Women in Finland got the right to vote in 1906. They came here and got into politics, unions, and cooperatives and got the right to vote in 1920 with the 19th Amendment. Nordic immigrants built a church first, a school second.

“There were thousands of Scandinavian politicians that got involved right away and became skilled leaders,” Bergman said.

There’s a statue at the Capitol for Norway-born Knute Nelson, in 1892 the first Scandinavian governor. John A. Johnson, son of Swedish immigrants and the first Minnesota born governor, also has a statue. Prohibition was known as the “Norwegian Law” because of Minnesota Congressman Andrew Volstead. Gov. Floyd B. Olson was the son of a Norwegian and a Swede. He led the Farmer Labor Party, which became the Democratic Farmer Labor Party in 1944 through the work of Norwegian-American Hubert Humphrey. Bergman says all but 5 of 26 governors from 1893 to 1999 were Scandinavians, most progressive Republicans, none rich.

This is our history and Bergman has given us access to it in his new book from the beginning, to a chapter of “Finns on the Range,” to last November’s elections and Minneapolis Ward 6 becoming Little Mogadishu.

Arne Carlson was the last Scandinavian governor in 1999 and in the book he says there may be no more of them.

Bergman’s book is a great 310 page story of our history with many interviews. Our region has great coverage. What a gift! Thanks, Klas!
Tax Day came and went. Do you know where your tax dollars are going?

National Priorities Project has released its breakdown of how the federal government spent each dollar of income taxes paid by individuals last year. Here’s a look at their 2016 Tax Receipt:

1. Americans are unified about paying your taxes

The federal budget is roughly $4.2 trillion, and more than 80% - comes from payroll and income taxes individuals pay. While we may be a divided country in almost every respect, our respect for taxes actually brings us together: 94% of Americans agree that paying your fair share of taxes is a civic duty. More Americans agree that it’s important to pay your taxes than agree that we’re divided as a nation. Maybe there’s hope for us, yet.

2. Paying taxes strengthens your community

How do you feel about your local food bank? Does your city have Meals on Wheels? Are there good schools? Do the potholes get fixed? Is there a good hospital nearby?

While they may not be run by the federal government, all of these things depend in part on federal spending to thrive. And all make our communities healthier, happier, and stronger.

In 2014, local and state governments received more than $600 billion in federal funding. About $66 billion of that went directly to city governments. On average, 30% of a state’s budget, and 22% of a city’s budget, will come from the federal government, whose help couldn’t easily be replaced.

3. Health care is the biggest item on your tax receipt

Out of every tax dollar you pay, 29¢ goes to health care, and 23¢ goes to the military.

The health care portion of your tax dollar is split almost equally between Medicare (11.4¢) and Medicaid (12.4¢). The Children’s Health Insurance Program accounts for half a penny of every tax dollar.

The most recent data shows Medicaid covered more than 68 million people during December (more people would be covered for the full year). The Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) covered more than 5.5 million children.

Medicaid also covers millions of children — in 2016, children accounted for half of enrollment in Medicaid and CHIP.

In 2015, Medicare covered more than 55 million adults. In 2014, 38% of Medicare financed from the government’s general revenues — taxes paid by individuals and corporations and other sources. Your income taxes fund Medicare parts B and D, which includes Medicare-covered doctor visits, lab tests, and prescriptions. The rest of Medicare, or 62%, is covered by dedicated payroll taxes and by beneficiaries themselves.

4. Got a nickel for the troops?

Of every dollar you pay in income taxes, 23¢ goes to the military – but only 5¢ supports our troops. An additional 6¢ supports our veterans by providing health care, disability payments, and benefits for families of deceased soldiers.

Altogether, that means 11¢ of each tax dollar goes to our current and former military for their service, while 18¢ goes to maintaining military, procuring weapons and supplies.

5. Some profitable corporations pay nothing in taxes

Corporations contribute only about 11% of federal revenues, and many profitable ones use tax loopholes to pay nothing at all. Over an eight year period, out of 258 profitable Fortune 500 companies, 100 of them managed to pay nothing in federal taxes in one or more years. Eighteen companies -- including General Electric, Priceline.com and PG&E -- paid nothing for all eight years despite making a profit every year.

In all, the 258 profitable corporations used legal loopholes to pay an average tax rate of 21.2% — far lower than the 35% official corporate rate.

6. Our tax system helps working families — really

While many of the biggest tax breaks in our system benefit the 1% or corporations, some tax breaks benefit working families. Families earning up to $75,000 can benefit from the Earned Income Tax Credit. In 2014 EITC provided families with nearly $68 billion in tax breaks. And $58 billion of that was “refundable” — meaning the government actually made payments to working families beyond just a tax refund. In all, 28 million taxpayers — about one in five — benefited from EITC. The average benefit was $2,399.

The Child Tax Credit helped more than 22 million taxpayers, providing an average credit (or money back from the taxes you pay) of $1,211 per taxpayer.

7. The highest individual tax rate used to be 91 percent

Our progressive tax code is designed so that the more money you make, the higher percentage you pay in taxes (unless you don’t, since many high earners receive more tax breaks than their middle income peers).

Today’s highest tax rate for the wealthiest Americans is 39.6%, but there’s nothing magic about this number. If you go back to just the 1960s, 70s or 80s, the top tax rate was much higher – between 50 and 91 percent. Only in 1987 did it come down below 50%.

Even a small change in the top tax rate of a few percent can make a big difference in how much the federal government brings in — and that revenue can be used for anything from health care, to the families. Meanwhile, working families pay 12.2 percent.

Where Your 2016 Tax Dollar Went

Health 29.1c
Interest on Federal Debt 13.2c
Veterans Benefits 6c
Food & Agricultural 4.5c
Education 2.8c
Housing & Community 2.1c
Energy & Environment 1.6c
International Affairs 1.3c
Science 1c

AFSCME leaflets on tax day for fairness

Last-minute tax filers were greeted by members of AFSCME Council 5 on Tax Day – Tuesday, April 18 – at post offices in Brainerd, Duluth, Minneapolis and St. Cloud. Union volunteers asked taxpayers a simple question: “Do you want to pay more so the rich can pay less?” and handed out flyers to that effect.

Under Republican proposals, tax breaks for top earners and big corporations would cost Minnesota more than a billion dollars a year.

The richest 5 percent of Minnesotans pay 11.3 percent of their income in state and local taxes. Meanwhile, working families pay 12.2 percent.

Thanks to DFL Governor Mark Dayton, the tax disadvantage that middle-income families experience has diminished, but they’re still paying 8 percent more per dollar of income in state and local taxes than their wealthy neighbors (Source: Minnesota Department of Revenue, 2017 Tax Incidence Study).

“Working families pay their taxes,” explained Eliot Seide, Director of AFSCME Council 5. “We think big corporations and the richest Minnesotans should pay their fair share, too. It’s the fairest way to invest in a better future for everyone. It’s simply wrong to put their wealth ahead of our health and our children’s education.”

AFSCME Council 5 supports Gov. Dayton’s tax plan, which closes corporate tax loopholes and expands tax relief for hardworking families. His Working Family Tax Credit would save the average family $2,399 per year. His Child Care Tax Credit would help 75,000 families save an additional $379 a year.

Stop Tax giveaways

These AFSCME Council 5 members leafleted the Duluth Main Post Office on Tax Day April 18 asking last minute filers if they wanted to pay more so the rich could pay less. If not text TAX to 237263, or call 855-974-4273 (senators), 855-402-6561 (representatives).
AFL-CIO safety official worried about Trump’s view on workplace safety
By Mark Gruenberg
PAI Staff Writer

The Republican Trump administration and the GOP-run Congress could undo years of progress in protecting safety and health on the job, the AFL-CIO’s top safety official says.

In a press conference accompanying the federation’s release of its annual Death on the Job report, Safety and Health Director Peg Seminario said the impact would come from both repeal of regulations and from cuts in the Labor Department budget.

DOL budget cuts could include cutting Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Mine Safety and Health Administration funds. Business wants to cut OSHA, particularly enforcement. Trump wants to cut the overall DOL budget 21%.

“What we’ve seen is a number of executive orders that deal with regulation,” or, to be more precise, deregulation, Seminario explained. “He said during the campaign that he wants to cut rules by 70 percent, and this is one promise that it looks like he’ll keep.”

That could have a profound impact on future job safety and health of the nation’s workers, she said, especially since in the last eight years, the Democratic Obama administration implemented major rules to cut worker exposure to health hazards such as beryllium and silica.

The fed’s report details the acrimonious process, too.

“And we did see penalties go up, particularly for serious violations,” Seminario said. OSHA and other federal agencies pushed that initiative through last year’s GOP-run Congress, convincing solons to raise OSHA fines for the first time since 1990 and index them to inflation.

In an instance of the future harms Seminario fears from Trump and the GOP, the two repealed an OSHA rule requiring employers to retain accurate job safety and health records for five years, not six months. “We’ve also seen the delays in silica and beryllium rule enforcement and that can cost workers’ lives” even if those OSHA rules ultimately take effect, she warned.

And OSHA started work on a new rule, pushed by National Nurses United, to force firms, especially health care institutions, to develop programs, warning and training to prevent workplace violence, notably on-the-job injuries to nurses and other female workers from violent patients and clients. But it did so only 10 days before Trump took office.

The budget cuts could also mean OSHA’s “capacity, or lack of capacity, to deal with” job safety and health violations on an industry-wide basis would shrink, Seminario warned. The agency already has so few inspectors, the report says, that a federal OSHA inspector can visit a covered workplace on an average of once every 159 years, a record low. An inspector from a state OSHA program the feds approved visits workplaces an average of once every 99 years.

Those OSHAs could suffer from the budget cuts too: The feds supply half their funds.

Other key findings from the report, which covers deaths and injuries on the job in 2015, the most recent full year available:

• Hazardous working conditions killed 13 workers a day, 365 days a year. That works out to one death every other hour.

• 4,836 workers were killed in 2015, and the fatality rate “flattened,” Seminario said, at 4.3 deaths per 100,000 workers, same as 2014. That figure does not count the 50,000-60,000 workers who died last year from job related diseases.

• Nearly 3.7 million work-related injuries and illnesses were reported, but workers comp claims and other data, has double to triple the number.

• The states with the highest death rates were North Dakota (12.5 deaths per 100,000 workers), Wyoming (12 per 100,000), Montana (7.5 per 100,000), Mississippi (6.8 per 100,000), Arkansas (5.8 per 100,000) and Louisiana (5.8 per 100,000 workers).

Seminario explained. “He said during the campaign that he wants to cut rules by 70 percent, and this is one promise that it looks like he’ll keep.”

Acosta is Secretary of Labor
WASHINGTON (PAI)—By a 60-38 vote April 27, the GOP-run Senate approved Republican President Trump’s nomination of Florida law school dean and bank official Alexander Acosta as Secretary of Labor. He is the sole Latino in Trump’s Cabinet.

Eight Democrats, most of them holding seats that are up in Trump-carried states next year, joined 51 Republicans and Sen. Angus King, Ind.-Maine, in voting for Acosta. The other Democrats and Sen. Bernie Sanders, Ind.-Vt., opposed him. One senator from each party was absent.


The AFL-CIO had no immediate comment on Acosta’s confirmation. It had been skeptical about his record, despite his prior service as a National Labor Relations Board member. But several unions, including the Laborers and the Fire Fighters, previously supported him, citing that record. Fire Fighters President Harold Schaitberger called Acosta “fair, reasonable and accessible,” while Laborers President Terry O’Sullivan said his “fair, reasonable and accessible,” while Laborers President Terry O’Sullivan said his “fair, reasonable and accessible.”

Acosta, 51, is a life-long resident of Florida, a registered Republican and a former University of Florida law school dean and bank official. He also served as the law school’s dean. But severable after his nomination to the NLRB, he was confirmed by a 58-42 vote. He worked as a federal judge in Miami District Court.

Business wants to cut the overall DOL budget 21%.

Acosta’s nomination was met with fierce opposition from the labor movement.

Acosta is a member of the executive board of the National Right to Work Committee, a group that fights unionization rates and less safety and health protection for workers.

Latino worker deaths on the job jumped by 99, to 903, in 2015, 18 percent above the national figure. Latino workers are overrepresented in three high-hazard, high-death rate occupations: Construction, mining, and transportation.

DEATH ON THE JOB REPORT: SAFETY AND HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

The report calls for an end to the budget cuts.

“The GOP-run Congress has moved forward on a budget proposal for fiscal year 2018 that includes a $1 billion cut to the Labor, Justice and Health and Human Services budget, and $280 million for OSHA,” Seminario said.

The budget cuts could also mean OSHA’s “capacity, or lack of capacity, to deal with” job safety and health violations on an industry-wide basis would shrink, Seminario warned. The agency already has so few inspectors, the report says, that a federal OSHA inspector can visit a covered workplace on an average of once every 159 years, a record low. An inspector from a state OSHA program the feds approved visits workplaces an average of once every 99 years. Those OSHAs could suffer from the budget cuts too: The feds supply half their funds.

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Twin SET• $1274 • $554
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Sen. Klobuchar sees bi-partisan support for Trump’s infrastructure plan

Senator Amy Klobuchar held a Northeast Minnesota Infrastructure Summit in Duluth April 11 and said there is bi-partisan support in Congress for President Trump’s proposed $1 trillion infrastructure investment. That’s a good thing she said because the American Society of Civil Engineers give the our transportation and infrastructure systems failing grades. She came here to hear from leaders in those fields.

“Potholes alone cost $3 billion a year in vehicle repairs, $300 on average per repair,” Klobuchar said. That’s the low end of infrastructure needs but she heard much more.

Duluth Seaway Port Authority Executive Director Vanta Coda said federal TIGER grants have allowed investment of $20 million here in 2.5 years and need to continue. FAST grants have helped the I-35 Can of Worms project that is crucial to the port.

Coda told Klobuchar raiding the Harbor Maintenance Tax for the general fund to the tune of $9 billion, about half its total has to stop. He also made a pitch for repair work on the Soo Locks that are so critical to the Twin Ports. Investing in the locks could result in a fix of problems that have resulted from a half century of neglect well beyond their life span.

Shaun Germolus, Airport Manager of Hibbing’s Range Regional Airport, said proposed cuts in the Trump budget for regional air service would be devastating to rural airports. The 1978 deregulation of the airline industry finds carriers no longer caring about promises made to small communities, which need FAA and air traffic control funding to be viable. He said the user based fee program supports $288 million in funding that helps 173 communities, with need FAA and air traffic control funding to be viable. The $4.50 passenger facility charge has been the same since 2000 and needs to be adjusted to really help.

MnDOT District 1 Engineer Duane Hill made a pitch for the trunk highway system that has a 10-year, $6 billion gap that equates to $600 million a year in a lack of funding.

“We feel like we’re managing the degradation of our transportation system,” Hill said. Pavement and bridges deplete the budget, leaving little for safety and other needs.

Hill said major projects like the I-35 Can of Worms, several hundred million for an overdue Blatnik Bridge replacement, and a nine mile, four lane completion of the Cross Range Hwy. 169 are serious needs.

Steve Giorgi of the Range Association of Municipalities and Schools said underground infrastructure for water and wastewater treatment is crumbling with communities unable to pay for repairs. “Most were built in the 1960s with their 20-year lifespans exceeded,” Giorgi said. Unfunded mandates for mercury, phosphate, and perhaps soon, sulphates, are impossible to comply with for small communities. He said the newest wastewater system serves Chisholm, Buell, Kinney, and Great Scott Township and cost $23 million.

“It now needs $5 million, without federal funding, more to decrease mercury that will weigh the equivalent of three pennies,” Giorgi said.

Jim Benning, Director of Public Works and Utilities for Duluth, said the city’s 470 miles of roads, 120 bridges, and 1600 miles of underground infrastructure that are on average 80 years old, are impossible for the city to keep up with at $5.7 million annually.

“We don’t expect the federal government to solve our problems, but it is too large for us,” Benning said. “We need a robust transportation bill.”

Duluth Building & Construction Trades Council President Craig Olson, a panel member, said 6,000 men and women in 15 trades depend on construction jobs like infrastructure and transportation to make their middle class families secure. He said the state’s inability to get a bonding bill passed puts a greater need for federal funding.

“One million dollars in construction spending equals 15.3 good jobs with benefits for our members and the communities they live in,” Olson said.

Klobuchar said one way to pay for infrastructure needs is to offer tax incentives for American corporations and individuals that have money overseas to bring it back home.

Some have expressed concern that Trump would “fund” his plan by offering massive tax breaks to private-public partnerships (P3s) to get private investment. The Nation’s Michelle Chen wrote, “The goal isn’t fixing bridges so much as fixing the corporate tax codes to promote privatization and unregulated construction with virtually no public input.” Coda said P3s can work and are used about 10% of the time. Hill said P3s don’t look much different than bonding.

Klobuchar said there are also concerns about cuts in Trump’s budget for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative that even Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker opposes. She cited the Northern Lights Express train and critical need for broadband as needed projects. She said the Flint, Michigan water crisis has everyone concerned about clean water. And competitive rail rates are in question because of a virtual rail monopoly by four carriers when there were 50 not long ago. “Captive customers” on the last leg of a route are price gouged, which increases the costs to customers.
New report shows again that mining jobs, not tourism, drive economy here

The battle between union members fighting for mining jobs in northeast Minnesota against environmentalists who say tourism jobs are a better fit got another look in a new report.

In late April Mining Minnesota released an economic report of the Duluth-Arrowhead region that reinforces the critical role mining plays in the local economy and the complementary role of tourism. Mining provides good, living-wage jobs and creates broad-based economic impact. Tourism and the outdoors make the area a desirable place for workers to live.

Some highlights of the report:

- Mining contributes significantly more in earnings to Duluth-Arrowhead than tourism – $419 million compared to just $16 million – even with 1,250 fewer jobs.
- In the Duluth-Arrowhead region, the average mining salary is $81,000 compared to tourism’s $18,000 a year.
- Although mining is a smaller industry with 5,140 jobs compared to tourism’s 6,400, 10 percent growth in mining would generate more new jobs, higher earnings and greater tax revenue than equivalent tourism growth.
- Expanding both industries will generate more prosperity for the region, enhancing the quality of life for all residents.

Hundreds of millions of dollars earned through mining-related jobs are funneled into the local economy each year and generate $183 million in annual local, state and federal tax revenues – much-needed dollars that support our schools, fire and police protection, infrastructure, and other critical community services.

The 5,140 high-paying jobs in the mining sector support a significant number of jobs in tourism and recreation.

There is no doubt that the tourism economy and the outdoor assets of the region are an important part of the quality of life in the region. But without mining, more than 500 tourism jobs in food service, lodging, and recreation would be lost, say mining supporters.

“Tourism just isn’t enough for all our families to survive on,” said Craig Olson, President of the Duluth Building & Construction Trades Council. “We all love to get out and recreate, but we need good jobs in order to be able to do that.”

The report is at http://www.miningminnesota.com/economic-impact/
Activist training brings out many first timers spurred on by Nov. elections

While many Americans are disappointed, angry, even scared following last November’s elections, many others find themselves energized, even optimistic. Both camps have become engaged to counter the current political climate.

Three dozen people showed up and stayed for a 3-hour Labor Activist Training in Duluth’s Education Minnesota office the evening of April 5 to find out ways to bring back a country they can be proud of again.

“I’m optimistic,” said participant Duluth City Councilor Barb Russ, “I’ve never seen so many women get off the couch and get organized.” Many men in the room felt the same way.

“We are here because we are having these feelings,” said Minnesota AFL-CIO Field Director Bethany Winkels. “Our power is coming against the forces that want to reward billionaires.” She said organizing, training, and direct action will attract even more new people to change the way things are going.

“Direct action stopped the repeal of Obamacare,” Winkels said and that has been true from the Boston Tea Party, to civil rights, and same sex marriage wins.

Nonviolent direct action and civil disobedience come in many forms. It can be:

1) protests like pickets, marches, even postcards and letters to the editor. One participant said everyone should hook up with change.org.

2) Non-cooperation likes strikes and boycotts

3) Intervention was a Black Lives Matter tool of disruption

4) Creative solutions like joint childcare efforts, even community gardens in food desert neighborhoods.

The key is finding which tactic if right for the struggle and time you find yourself in.

Winkels said none of the four ways are right or wrong, and none are safe. You need to get everyone to buy in on the action and tactics people are willing to risk before a plan is launched she said.

You will be required to move outside your comfort levels to achieve your goals.

Participants went through a role playing exercise on a number of scenarios to gauge how effective/non-effective and violent/non-violent they felt various tactics would be. There was a wide range of opinions.

Scenarios included Fight for $15 actions at McDonald’s, and a post-Katrina fight for public housing.

Practical aspects of contacting and influencing elected officials were discussed with the role local, state, and federal levels control or affect issues. Participants were provided with contact information for officials.

“There are about 20,000 bills at the Minnesota Legislature so they’re hard to track,” said Winkels. “Use the resources of those who are paid to track bills.”

When participants were asked what they were worried about a lengthy discussion ensued on redistricting after the 2020 Census. Who makes those maps will be determined by the 2018 elections.

The North East Area Labor Council co-hosted the training. Their Field Coordinator Katie Humphrey ended the evening with an informative discussion on the efforts of the Earned Sick and Safe Time Taskforce in Duluth that will present their findings to city councilors on a possible ordinance. Those types of local actions have state Republicans so worried that they have introduced a “pre-emption” bill to not allow local rules for minimum wages or employee benefits.

Humphrey thanked City Councilor Zack Filipovich, who was in attendance, for his work to get the ESST Taskforce created. They held their last public input session April 19. There is a link at duluthmn.gov/city-council/earned-sick-and-safe-time-task-force/ for the public to find out how to impact the discussions.

“How fortunate we are to have progressive, labor-friendly elected officials as our allies,” Humphrey said.

Another activist training is being planned for September.