

LABOR WORLD

An Injury to One is an Injury to All!

WEDNESDAY MAY 6, 2009 VOL. 114 NO. 21



Tim Flett, left, a member of Painters & Allied Trades Local 106, accepts a Workers' Memorial Day Proclamation from City Council President Greg Gilbert on behalf of his friend, Duane Jensen, who died on the job last year removing trees. Between them is Dick Sackett, Assistant Business Manager of IBEW Local 31, who accepted a Proclamation on behalf of Chief Warrant Officer Philip E. Windorski, Jr., who died last year serving in the Iraq War. Sackett brought it to Windorski's mother in Grand Rapids. Members of the Duluth Fire Fighters Honor Guard are in the background.

Workers remembered around Minnesota

Duluth area trade unionists joined their brothers and sisters around the state in commemorating Workers Memorial Day.

In Duluth the observance is always held the Monday closest to April 28, which is the actual recognized date. A free Solidarity Breakfast in Duluth requires Community Service Program and United Way of Greater Duluth volunteers to do the prep work on Sunday night. This year over 100 were served again.

Duluth City Council President Greg Gilbert stood in for Mayor Don Ness, who was out of town, in presenting official proclamations to the families who lost loved ones at work last year. Ness officially proclaimed April 27, 2009 as Workers' Memorial Day in the City of Duluth.

Among those remembered was Roberto Pearson, a Boilermakers Local 647 apprentice, died from a fall in an industrial accident at Big Stone Power Plant in Big Stone, ND, on Memorial Day, 2008. He was from rural Douglas County. His parents Marty and Jeri Pearson, attended the breakfast and observance.

"We really appreciate all the support we've received from Roberto's union brothers and sisters," said his father Marty. "He was really proud to be a Boilermaker."

As part of the Duluth observance a pear tree was planted east of the Labor Temple, amongst trees planted in the past 20 years of observances.

Minnesota Department of Transportation message boards in Duluth also recognized Workers Memorial Day.

Around Minnesota obser-

vances were held in St. Paul, Apple Valley, Rochester, Mankato, Oakdale, and at the Minnesota Twins Target Field under construction in Minneapolis.

Workers Memorial Day, April 28, is the anniversary of the creation of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the federal agency charged with setting standards and enforcing workplace safety. While many workers' lives have been saved through increased regulation, many still continue to die in workplace accidents or face debilitating injuries - ranging from back problems to illnesses caused by long-term exposure to hazardous substances.

In Washington DC hearings were held during Workers Memorial Day week to call attention to the small fines employers face for violating the OSHAct. The Protecting America's Workers Act (H.R. 2067) has been introduced to change that.

Workers' Memorial Day: Congress considers higher fines, jail time for job safety violations

By Mark Gruenberg
PAI Staff Writer

OLA, Ark. (PAI)--Four and a half years ago, 19-year-old Jeremy Foster, hired by a temp agency to work in the Deltic Timber sawmill in Ola, Ark., went to work. He never came home. His body wound up at the coroner's. He was strangled by the mill's wood-chipper, which lacked a safety guard. The wood-chipper grabbed his shirt.

Deltic sent two men to the Fosters' door to express their condolences and sent flowers to his funeral, his step-mother, Becky, says. And that's all. His death cost the company \$2,250. That's how much the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) eventually fined Deltic for removing the protective guard from the wood-chipper.

OSHA did a little better the next time a Deltic worker died on the job, at a 2007 fire at another sawmill in Waldo, Ark. That blaze killed Darrell Richards of Junction City and injured two of his colleagues. OSHA fined Deltic \$13,500.

The small fines -- and no jail terms for negligence or willful disregard of safety standards -- are the rule, not the exception, when it comes to death and injury on the job. The difference this year is the

House Education and Labor Committee, after an April 28 hearing featuring Becky Foster and several job safety experts, appears determined to do something about it.

Their remedy: The Protecting America's Workers Act, HR 2067, increasing the fines OSHA can levy against companies that willfully or seriously disregard job safety standards and converting corporate refusal to abide by job safety rules, in cases where a worker dies, to a felony punishable by a long jail term, as is the case with other federal regulatory laws. The bill also extends OSHA to cover groups of workers it now doesn't.

The legislation putting tougher teeth into OSHA got a favorable hearing from the panel, with chairman George Miller, D-Calif., pledging to move it quickly, over the objections of top Republican Buck McKeon, R-Calif. -- but not his GOP colleagues.

The hearing was one of several on Capitol Hill on Workers Memorial Day. That day, each April 28, honors men and women who gave their lives on the job. The AFL-CIO marked the occasion with its 19th annual report about death and injury on the job, pointing out 5,657 workers lost their lives on the job in 2007, the most recent year for which figures are available. Another 50,000 died from job-caused diseases.

But the penalties for such deaths are shockingly low and enforcement is weak to non-

existent, AFL-CIO Occupational Safety and Health Director Peg Seminario told lawmakers. "The average penalty" nationwide "for a serious violation of the Occupational Safety and Health Act is about \$900. The average penalty for worker deaths is \$11,300, but there is great variability in enforcement and penalties," she said.

"What kind of message does it send to employers, workers and family members that the death of a worker caused by a serious or repeated violation of the law warrants only a penalty of a few thousand dollars?" Seminario asked. "It tells them there is little value placed on the lives of workers in this country and that there are no serious consequences for violating the law."

And since causing a death on the job is only a misdemeanor under federal law, there have been only 71 prosecutions -- and a total of 42 months of jail time for those convicted -- in the 39 years since the job safety and health law passed, said former Justice Department official and federal prosecutor David Uhlmann. "In that time, there have been 350,000 deaths on the job," Seminario added.

But the low fines and few prosecutions are not the only problems witnesses discussed at the congressional hearings:

• An April 30 House hearing spotlighted a recent Government Accountability Office report showing the anti-

See Higher fines...page 6

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Building Trades' DADS Golf Outing June 13th will see a few changes in 19th year

This year will bring changes to the incredibly successful Dollars Against Diabetes (DADS) Golf Outing sponsored by the Duluth Building & Construction Trades Council.

Duluth's DADS Golf founder and chair Jerry Alander has stepped down after 18 years of organizing and running the most successful labor fundraiser in the region. He has turned over the reins to Jim Stebe of Bricklayers & Allied Crafts Local 1, and Dana Marciniak, office manager for Painters & Allied Trades Local 106 and the DBCTC.

Stebe has decided to change the tee-time format for the 19th annual event scheduled for Saturday, June 13 at Lester Park Golf Course in Duluth.



Happy 90th Birthday (May 3) Pete Seeger! The legendary, folk singer, union activist, environmental champion, and progressive was honored at a fundraiser for his beloved Hudson River Sunday at Madison Square Garden. (Photo is www.pbase.com/dond/image/94155674.)

Labor Day Picnic fundraising

The Duluth AFL-CIO Central Labor Body's Labor Day Picnic Committee has shifted into gear for its 120th observance of the only official workers' holiday in the United States. This year's event comes as late as it possibly can with the first Monday in September being the 7th day of that month.

With its location at Bayfront Festival Park now, the picnic has become even more popular with the many thousands, a lot of them entire families, attending the free event.

"With food, beverages, entertainment, and prizes being provided free of charge, the popular end of summer picnic requires substantial donations in terms of funds and volunteers," said Picnic Chair Yvonne Harvey. "Recently, financial donations have been lacking and the picnic's existence is in jeopardy."

Donations from unions and other labor bodies are what keeps the picnic going. Your organization can send its donation to Duluth Central Body, 2002 London Road, Room 110, Duluth, MN 55812. The phone number is 218-724-1413.

If you or your organization would like to volunteer for any aspect of the picnic contact Yvonne Harvey at 728-1779.

I.U.O.E. Local 70

Monthly Arrowhead Regional Meeting

Tuesday, May 12, 2009, 5:00 P.M.

Duluth Labor Center, Hall B

Dick Lally, Business Manager (651) 646-4566

"We're going to go to a 9:00 a.m. shotgun start, rain or shine," Stebe said. "We'll start two groups together on each tee box, which will give us a common ending time for everyone. After golf we'll have a bar-b-que and an awards presentation."

Car pooling to Lester will be a good idea for teams so as to cut back on traffic and parking congestion before the tournament gets underway.

Since 1986, Trades Councils have raised over \$40 million in the fight against diabetes. Last year brought in over \$1 million. Locally about \$9,000 is raised yearly, part of which is donated to the United Way of Greater Duluth. The DADS committee and the Community Services Program work with UWGD to make sure the donation ends up where it is most needed.

Nationally, DADS money was used to build the Diabetes Research Institute at the University of Miami (Florida). Proceeds are now being used to retire the debt for the project and to fund diabetes research.

"We're happy to carry on the tradition of the DADS Golf Outing to help find a cure for diabetes which affects so many of our members and friends," Stebe said. "It's always been a special event and this year we hope to increase its social aspect with participants being able to mingle together at the end. The outing is always a great way to make an important

contribution to a great cause."

Cost of the tournament remains \$100 per individual, \$400 per team. Golf carts, greens fees and the bar-b-que to follow golf are included in the entry fee.

"We encourage everyone, teams and individuals, to register early," said Marciniak. "We may need to hold it to 36 teams this year to see how the shotgun start and everyone eating at the same time will work."

If you are unable to attend the June 13 event a donation for the cause would be greatly appreciated she said. Donating door prizes for contestants is another fine way to be involved. Hole sponsorships at \$100 each are also available.

Make checks payable to Duluth Building and Construction Trades, DADS Day Event, and mail to: DADS Day Event, Duluth Building & Construction Trades Council, 2002 London Road, Room 106, Duluth, MN 55812

For more information contact Dana Marciniak at 218-724-6466.



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Railroad meeting shows a lot of good reasons for go-ahead

By Chad McKenna, NEALC Field Organizer

The debate over a comprehensive freight and passenger rail plan for the state of Minnesota made a stop in Duluth April 29th. Dozens of union members were among the 150 in attendance at the Depot to give their input on a presentation by the Minnesota Department of Transportation and Cambridge Systematics (CS), a transportation consulting firm MnDOT is using. The Duluth meeting was one of many held in the state by MnDOT to solicit public input on a plan to inventory rail infrastructure and put forth possibilities for its' improvement and expansion.

One passenger rail plan that is gaining speed is the Northern Lights Express, which would travel between Duluth and Minneapolis, via Cambridge, Hinckley, and Superior, WI.

United Transportation Union (UTU) members from three locals at the meeting offered their views on the benefits and drawbacks of using the existing BNSF rail line for passenger rail. One plus is that the rail and easements already exist, and the rail line would have to be updated, not built from scratch. A drawback is that passenger rail would share the line with freight trains, meaning the passenger train would be traveling at slower speeds and making the trip longer.

One suggestion was to run the line along the Munger Trail – meaning the train would bypass Superior, WI. Dan Olson, Business Manager of Laborers Local 1091 and Superior City Council President, commented on the need to keep Superior on the route. Wisconsin recently expanded the Regional Transportation Authority in northwest Wisconsin with grants from the State of Wisconsin. He said transportation improvements due to RTA expansion means there is a possibility for Wisconsin residents to make use of the Duluth-MPLS rail line.

"Superior would add to ridership thus adding to the viability of this project as a whole," Olson said.

There would be commercial benefits to a high speed train between the Twin Ports and the Twin Cities. Business travelers would be able to work during their commute and Minnesota Twins and Viking fans could have group trips to games.

The train could have a huge impact for area veterans. A visit from the Iron Range to the Twin Cities VA hospital can be a 15 hour trip for area veterans. The train would provide a quicker option than existing van trips for veterans unable to drive.

In addition to the jobs created for the actual operation of the train—possibly run by the National Passenger Railroad Corporation (Amtrak)—the project would mean construction work.

"There are 25-30 percent of the men and women in our trades unemployed," said Craig Olson, President of the Duluth Building & Construction Trades Council. He said the trades support the project not only because it would put highly skilled trades people to work in a very tough economy, but because we must start to address our transportation needs for the future now.

Phil Qualy, UTU's State Legislative Director called the meeting very positive. "UTU believes a new intermodal container facility should be built in the Port of Duluth and any new passenger rail service to Chicago and the Twin Cities should be union built, union maintained, and union run."

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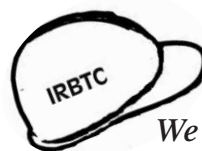
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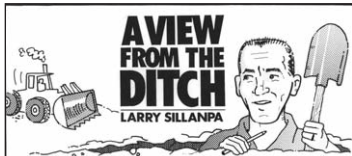
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President John Grahek, 1-218-741-2482

Financial-Secretary Michael Syversrud, 107 S. 15th Ave. W., Virginia, MN. 55792



In my never ending effort to keep you within two weeks of breaking news I offer this: Last Saturday was free comic book day and as many as 2 million were expected to be handed out by retailers. If you're a lover of comic books you probably have learned how to travel back in time to Saturday to take advantage of the promotion. I did and got a vintage "Silver Surfer." If you are without metaphysical wings try visiting www.freecomickbookday.com.

As I stated in my April Fool rant I don't know much about economics beyond counting what's in my wallet and deciding where it could take me. That may be changing now thanks to a comic book.

We're all getting bombarded by economic news now that we're going to hell in a hand basket but it's difficult for me to get my head around the big picture--or in my metaphysical metaphor mixing manner, finding the thread that allows me to tie it all together. (You still with me or did you go back to "The



Sound and the Fury?")

The comic book is the "Economic Meltdown Funnies," co-production of Jobs with Justice and the Institute for Policy Studies Program on Inequality and the Common Good. The 16-page EMF has text by Chuck Collins and Nick Thorkelson, and drawings by Thorkelson. It's free at <http://economicmeltdownfunnies.org>. The comic first summarizes the trends that led to our economic meltdown. Things like lack of government regulation, ignored warnings of housing bubbles and mortgage refinancing, get rich quick investment schemes, and a middle class facing stagnant wages and soaring costs.

The authors call it the "Casino Economy." I'll have to admit I'm using my home a little like an ATM too. Not a good thing to do if you want to avoid doo-doo the comic says. I have avoided bad loans many are tied to, however.

Anyway, while you and I have been struggling, the very wealthy couldn't get enough. EMF says those with "new wealth" invested in unregulated schemes promising high returns, which worked for a bit.

I remember Tony Ridder, CEO of Knight-Ridder, which is gone but was the, what, 5th largest newspaper chain in the U.S. a few years ago, saying he needed to get a 26% return for shareholders. In newspapers!

Foreign trade has a lot to do with our current economic plight as well. Think about how many American-made cars are sold in other countries versus how many foreign-made cars are sold here. Count the Buicks in Tokyo for fun.

And while we're being told to go out and consume more, more reasonable people have been telling us for decades that consumption is our biggest problem and is unsustainable. Can you say overproduction?

Wal-Mart execs told Con-

gress a couple of years ago that there needed to be a minimum wage increase because their sales were down. People didn't earn enough to be consumers.

The dot.com bubble burst and the best investment, as we've always been told, was our home. Perfect time for predatory lending by those who were so smart they could outsmart the market by repackaging debt and flipping houses. Then the housing bubble burst.

There was even a hard push to get Social Security invested with Wall St. financiers so even people with little money could be better off. Whew, good thing that was fought off. Then the rich folk cried about estate taxes while whining about socialism. That is until we used socialism to bail out capitalists.

EMF authors compare this economic climate with what was happening just before the Great Depression, give us a refresher on the New Deal, and have solutions to our problems.

I won't ruin your reading of the comic book by telling you what's in it and how smart I've gotten from reading it myself. Kind of like a smarter than a fifth grader book report but it'd just come off as a tale told by an idiotor probably anyway. You'll do better on your own.

Enjoy a comic book today!

This Day In History
www.workdayminnesota.org
May 6, 1935

With the country sunk in the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 7034 and appropriated \$4.8 billion for the Works Progress Administration. The WPA put millions of Americans to work constructing buildings, painting murals to decorate them and performing plays for audiences that had never before seen a dramatic production. In the process, many were saved from poverty and starvation.

University study finds no union intimidation from card check

Majority sign up does not cause union or employer intimidation, according to a new report released Monday by University of Illinois Professor Robert Bruno. Bruno analyzed data from public sector workers in Illinois for six years and found that out of more than 21,000 people who joined unions through majority sign up, a process sometimes referred to as "card check," there was not a single proven case of union or employer intimidation.

The report says: *In brief, from 2003-2009, 21,197 public sector workers employed in state, county, municipal and educational institutions voluntarily joined a union. Most importantly, contrary to business claims, in nearly eight hundred petition cases, there was not a single confirmed incidence of union coercion.*

The report comes as Congress considers the Employee Free Choice Act, legislation that will give workers back the freedom to bargain with corporations for better wages and benefits. It includes a majority sign up provision which gives workers the choice of how to form a union rather than leaving that choice in employer's hands, as it is under current law. Opponents claim this will lead to intimidation and coercion from unions, but according to today's report, that simply isn't true.

"Today's report shows that corporations are throwing more lies to keep workers from forming unions," said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney. "Workers form unions to bargain for a better life, not because of outside intimidation. Workers need the majority sign up provision because it gives workers the choice of how to form a union, not corporations."

According to the findings, the lack of intimidation on either side shows that when there is a clear path to forming a union, the workplace as a whole functions more smoothly with no friction.

The report concludes: *As is true in so many other policy areas, on the subject of union representation the states are incubators for new ideas and practices. Illinois has demonstrated that a majority authorization petition can genuinely determine the will of the employees to be unionized and provides a functional, largely non-adversarial and event-less process for insuring a fair work environment for everyone.*

According to Bruno, the Illinois state law is very similar to the proposed Employee Free Choice Act majority sign up provision. The report, commissioned by the United Association for Labor Education is the first part of a nationwide report which analyzes similar state laws.

Unions like Obama's budget

(PAI)--AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney, AFSCME President Gerald McEntee and SEIU Sec.-Treas. Anna Burger applauded congressional passage of President Obama's \$3.4 trillion budget blueprint for the year starting Oct. 1.

Sweeney called the budget "a transformational blueprint for growing the middle class and making the economy work for everyone...Obama's budget includes a huge down payment on national health care reform, investment in growing green jobs and addressing climate change and more funding for education. The budget also moves away from the failed economic policies of the past and includes tax cuts for middle-class working families, rather than for the wealthy and Big Business."

McEntee said the budget, the children's health insurance law, the stimulus law and the Equal Pay Act "show the enormous progress we have made in changing the direction of our nation for the better." Burger said: "Congress took another giant step toward guaranteeing quality, affordable healthcare for everyone."

Is Stephen Colbert joking?

Politicalwire.com reports that an Ohio State University study (<http://hij.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/14/2/212>) finds that conservatives were more likely to report that Stephen Colbert "only pretends to be joking" on his Comedy Central television show "and genuinely meant what he said while liberals were more likely to report that Colbert used satire and was not serious when offering political statements."

The Irony of Satire: Political Ideology and the Motivation to See What You Want to See in The Colbert Report by Heather L. LaMarre, Kristen D. Landreville, and Michael A. Beam "found that individual-level political ideology significantly predicted perceptions of Colbert's political ideology. Additionally, there was no significant difference between the groups in thinking Colbert was funny."

~NOTICE~

Next issues of Labor World:
May 20; June 3, 24;
July 8, 22; Aug. 5, 19;
Sept. 2, 16; Oct. 7, 28;
Nov. 11, 24; Dec. 16.

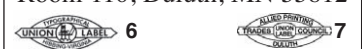
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May 1--Worthy Wage Day

By Randi Weingarten, President,
American Federation of Teachers

WASHINGTON—Early childhood educators and staff make it possible for parents to go to work every day and earn a living for their families. Yet these workers' meager wages and practically nonexistent benefits barely allow them to make ends meet.

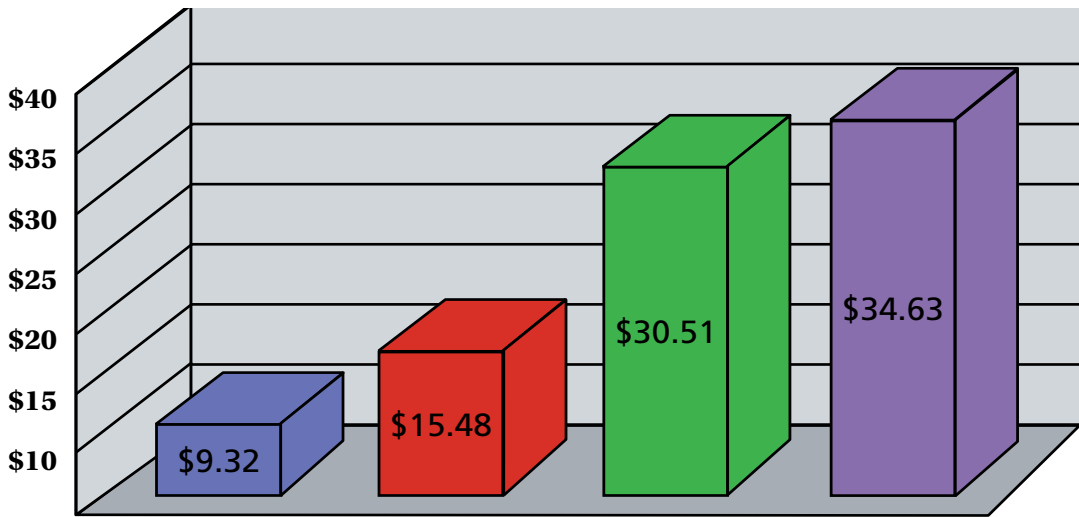
There is widespread recognition that high-quality early childhood education provides an essential foundation for future learning. The average salary for early childhood educators remains under \$19,000, only one-third have health insurance and even fewer have a pension—making it unrealistic to attract and retain well-trained professionals in this field.

The AFT supports using innovative compensation plans, such as career and wage ladders that provide monetary incentives including tuition reimbursements and stipends, to help and encourage early childhood educators to get additional training and professional development. This enables them to boost their wages and improve their ability to care for and teach children, which is good for both kids and educators.

Worthy Wage Day Fact Sheet

- Based on the average number of hours they work (at \$9.32/hour), child care workers earn \$18,623 per year.
- Occupations with wages comparable to child care workers include parking lot attendants (\$9.29) and bell hops (\$10.88).
- More than 12 million children are in child care every day.
- More than 4.6 million working family households rely on child care as a key ingredient to remaining employed.

Comparison of Mean Hourly Wages of Early Childhood Educators with Mean Hourly Wages of other Teachers



Child Care Worker **Preschool Teacher** **Kindergarten Teacher** **Elementary Teacher**

This information was gathered by the Center for the Child Care Workforce, a project of the American Federation of Teachers.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics; May 2007, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ocwage.t01.htm>.

Note: Child care worker wage figures cover a broad range of employment establishments including schools, child care facilities and hospitals.

County board needs to hear from assisted living supporters

On Tuesday, May 12 St. some of the county's most vulnerable residents.

Louis County commissioners are expected to vote on closing down the county's Assisted Living Program. The county's Department of Administration has made a recommendation to end the program that cares for

AFSCME Local 66.

The residents have mental and medical issues that make it impossible for them to care for themselves. Many of them are former residents of the facilities who were able to go about their days without the special care, but their medical conditions have become too difficult for them to handle themselves. Sometimes it's a function of the aging process, but the manors have been home to the residents and the assisted living program is their last option before a nursing home.

"Some of the commissioners think they'll just turn the residents over to the private sector," said Gary Anderson, AFSCME 66 steward for the unit. "But the private sector will just cherry pick the ones they want. Many of these residents are difficult to care for because of their mental state and medical conditions"

Commissioners Peg Sweeney and Steve O'Neil have been supportive of maintaining the program, Steve

Raukar, Mike Forsman, and Chris Dahlberg may be brought around with citizen's expressing their concern for preserving the care. Dennis Fink and Keith Nelson seem to be more interested in cutting services than assisting the living conditions for vulnerable county residents.

"They all need to hear from the public that the Assisted Living Program is an important, viable option in the menu of care available to county residents," said Anderson.

Here are the phone numbers for the county commissioners:

DULUTH

Dennis Fink 726-2458

Steve O'Neil 726-2359

Chris Dahlberg 726-2562

OUTSIDE DULUTH

Peg Sweeney 726-2450

VIRGINIA

Keith Nelson 749-7108

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Mike Forsman 365-8200

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Steve Raukar 262-0201

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✓ Questions answered reliably, accurately		Allegations of re-dispensing product that has been returned
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Painters donate \$75,000 to kids' hospital

By Barb Kucera, Editor
Workday Minnesota

MINNEAPOLIS - The Painters and Allied Trades for Children's Hope Foundation, or PATCH, presented Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota with a gift of \$75,000 to sponsor a "private room" for recovering children and their families in the new Neonatal Intensive Care Unit currently under construction.

"The men and women of the Painters and Allied Trades believe that our commitment to our communities matters more now than ever before because of these hard economic times," said IUPAT General President James A. Williams. "Projects such as this one must move forward for the sake of our children and we're pleased to make a difference. We hope that others will follow our lead."

While the facility is in the Twin Cities it serves families statewide and is supported statewide by IUPAT locals.

"We started out raffling off Harley Davidson motorcycles to fund the effort and it's really grown," said Craig Olson, Business Manager of Painters & Allied Trades Local 106 based in Duluth. "We've gotten grants for children and families in our region who need help. We're working on a grant right now for Duluth Public Schools after completing one for Proctor Schools in the past."

The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) in Minneapolis currently has 38 beds for critically ill infants, with an additional 26 transition beds. Families have little space near the beds and only rocking chairs to sit in.

The new rooms at the facility will offer a private bath;

space for the parents to care for their children; a couch that pulls out as a bed; a work station so they can connect with the Internet and get work done and some entertainment-oriented features for the children.

Moving sick children out of the intense environment of an open, shared space into private rooms helps reduce stress for the entire family and that promotes healing.

And, it will be the crafts men and women of the IUPAT who put the finishing touches - drywall finishing, painting and installing windows - on those very rooms. IUPAT members work for the contractor building the new facilities for the hospital.

"We are practicing state-of-the-art medicine in less than state-of-the-art surroundings," said Ellen Bendel-Stenzel, MD, staff neonatologist at Children's. "Having private rooms is extremely important because in the NICU we treat the entire family and not just the patient. Infants can spend several months at Children's, and it is ideal if we can make the surroundings comfortable and as close to home as possible."

"Knowing that we not only made one of these rooms possible with our PATCH gift, but that we will also be putting our own personal touch on the rooms makes this partnership with Children's Hospitals and Clinics even more rewarding," said local IUPAT leader Terry Nelson, business manager/secretary-treasurer of District Council 82 in Little Canada. "I doubt there are too many other donors out there who have the same opportunity."

Adopting the children's

hospital as its cause represents "coming full circle" for the council, Nelson noted. "Many of our members have had children who have been in the hospital, and the hospital uses all-union labor. It's a great partnership."

The International Union of Painters and Allied Trades represents more than 160,000 active and retired construction workers in the crafts of painting, drywall finishing, glass work and floor covering, among others.

The Painters and Allied Trades for Children's Hope Foundation, or PATCH, was founded in 2001 by the IUPAT to better the lives of children in need. Supported by the members of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades and other generous donors, the PATCH Foundation has given nearly \$1 million to local youth organizations throughout the United States.

"Children's has always appreciated the important support and services members of IUPAT and District Council 82 provide us every day," said Annie Waters, senior annual giving officer at the Foundation of Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota. "We are excited to expand this partnership with this generous gift from PATCH that will have a direct impact on our patients, their families and the men and women who provide for their care each day."

Minnesota's children's hospital since 1924, Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota is the 7th-largest pediatric health care organization in the U.S., with 332 staffed beds at its two hospitals in St. Paul and Minneapolis.



IUPAT District Council 82 Business Manager Terry Nelson, left, and Craig Olson, Business Manager of Painters & Allied Trades Local 106, present a check to Annie Waters, of the Foundation of Children's Hospitals and Clinics, and Jacob Wall, a patient, who serves on the Youth Advisory Committee and helped design new rooms. (IUPAT photo)

Womens' retreat rewarding

The University of Minnesota Labor Education Service's first ever Union Women's Leadership Retreat April 22-24 in Brainerd was a huge success with over 140 in attendance. Among attendees were four members of AFSCME Local 3801 from UMD.

"We're all glad we went and we learned a lot," said Geraldine Hughes. "We plan on sharing what we learned with our union sisters with the hopes that they too will some day be able to attend the retreat. We made new friends and have been inspired by their stories."

Becky Skurla said it was "a real eye-opener for me to see what others are facing in their workplace." She appreciated the fact that the retreat was geared for all union women, not just union leaders, and that's the reason she went to it she said.

For Beth Peterson the chance to network with female union activists representing diverse ethnic, geographic and career backgrounds was an empowering experience. "Our round table discussions were informative, inspiring, and at times quite entertaining. Energized and motivated, we left the conference with our tote bags filled with ideas, resources and great memories."



AFSCME 3801 members at the Retreat. (Submitted photo)

An opening panel of women shared their stories of overcoming adversity to become leaders. The panel included Lois Jensen, a former Iron Range Steelworker who fought harassment in the mines; Elva Neubauer, whose experience overcoming oppression in her native Mexico honed her skills to be an advocate for SEIU Health Care Minnesota; and Katie Farber, who helped to spearhead an innovative internal organizing campaign for AFSCME Local 34.

The success of the retreat will spur more programming for union women, including the possibility of the leadership retreat becoming an annual or biennial event, the LES staff said.

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Higher fines, jail in OSHA?

...from page 1

worker former GOP Bush administration's plan to have OSHA pursue only "the worst of the worst" -- the firms with the worst safety records in those industries with the highest job injury and fatality rates -- didn't work. Bush turned OSHA into a "consultative agency" for business.

- OSHA's maximum fine to a company for a willful or repeat violation of job safety and health law is \$7,000. It hasn't been raised, even for inflation, in 20 years. But OSHA's employee handbook tells its enforcement officials to start bargaining with the companies using a figure of \$5,000, with discounts for employer size (bigger cuts for smaller firms) and job safety history.

- Families of victimized workers are shut out of the negotiations -- something HR 2067 would remedy. If the workplace is unionized, unions are supposed to be included in negotiations between OSHA and employers on fines and remedies. "But we're often presented with a fait accompli" between OSHA and the firm, Seminario said.

- In just over half the states, state agencies are responsible for enforcing OSHA, and the quality of their enforcement varies widely. Iowa imposed the largest average fines when workers died on the job (\$45,499) and Utah the smallest (\$1,106).

- Politics can skew state job safety enforcement. Rep. Dana Titus, D-Nev., noted the Las Vegas Sun ran stories last year -- for which its now laid-off reporter won a Pulitzer Prize -- about the deaths of 12 construction workers in 18 months at a 24-hours-a-day 7-days a week construction site for a major Las Vegas project. Nevada OSHA failed, Titus said, because it was under the state's Department of Industry "and headed by a political appointee who intervened" in job safety probes "on behalf of the (Republican) governor's campaign contributors."

Seminario, Uhlmann and Foster had suggestions about toughening job safety law. One was to give the federal OSHA the power to take back investigations and enforcement if a state OSHA isn't doing the job. Seminario noted OSHA has only 948 inspectors -- its lowest total in 12 years -- or one for every 6.4 million workers.

Minnesota & Wisconsin Workplace Fatalities, 1992 - 2007

YEAR	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Minnesota	103	113	82	84	92	72	88	72	68	76	81	72	80	87	78	72
Wisconsin	135	138	109	117	108	114	97	105	107	110	91	103	94	125	91	104

The AFL-CIO Death on the Job report is at <http://www.aflcio.org/issues/safety/memorial/>

MINNESOTA WORKER SAFETY & HEALTH

Number of employees:¹ 2,687,482
 Number of establishments:¹ 167,996
 State or federal OSHA program:² State
 Number of workplace fatalities, 2007:³ 72
 Rate per 100,000 workers, 2007:⁴ 2.6
 National Rate, 2007: 3.8
 Ranking of state fatality rate, 2007:⁹ 8
 Total cases of workplace injuries, illnesses, 2007:⁵ 84,800
 Rate per 100 workers: 4.7
 National Rate: 4.2
 Total injury and illness cases with days away from work, job transfer or restriction, 2007:⁶ 41,300
 Rate per 100 workers: 2.3
 National Rate: 2.1
 Number of state and local employees:¹ 338,406
 Are state & local employees covered by the OSHA Act?² Yes
 Number of workplace safety/health inspectors, 2009:⁷ 57
 Number of workplace safety/health inspections, 2008:⁸ 2,498
 Construction: 995
 Non-construction: 1,503
 Length of time it would take for OSHA to inspect each workplace once: 67 yrs.
 Average penalty assessed for serious violations of OSHA Act 2008:⁸ \$635
 National average: \$921

WISCONSIN WORKER SAFETY & HEALTH

Number of employees:¹ 2,780,924
 Number of establishments:¹ 159,425
 State or federal OSHA program:² Federal
 Number of workplace fatalities, 2007:³ 104
 Rate per 100,000 workers, 2007:⁴ 3.5
 National Rate, 2007: 3.8
 Ranking of state fatality rate, 2007:⁹ 18
 Total cases of workplace injuries, illnesses, 2007:⁵ 101,400
 Rate per 100 workers: 5.3
 National Rate: 4.2
 Total injury and illness cases with days away from work, job transfer or restriction, 2007:⁶ 51,200
 Rate per 100 workers: 2.7
 National Rate: 2.1
 Number of state and local employees:¹ 350,499
 Are state & local employees covered by the OSHA Act?² No
 Number of workplace safety/health inspectors, 2009:⁷ 33
 Number of workplace safety/health inspections, 2008:⁸ 1,554
 Construction: 780
 Non-construction: 774
 Length of time it would take for OSHA to inspect each workplace once: 99 yrs.
 Average penalty assessed for serious violations of OSHA Act 2008:⁸ \$1,038
 National average: \$921

1 U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment and Wages: Annual Averages, 2007.

2 Under §18 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, a state may elect to run its own occupational safety and health program, provided that it is as effective as the federal program. One condition of operating a state plan is that the program must cover state and local employees who otherwise are not covered by the OSHA Act. Currently 21 states and one territory administer their own OSHA programs for both public and private sector workers. CT, NJ, NY and VI have state programs for public employees only.

3 U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 2007.

4 Preliminary rate by AFL-CIO using BLS 2007 CFOI fatality number & preliminary 2007 employment data from Current Population Survey.

5 U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses, 2007.

6 USDOL Bureau of Labor Statistics, State Data, Nonfatal Occupational Injuries and Illnesses Requiring Days Away from Work, 2007.

7 USDOL, OSHA, Summary of State Safety/Health Compliance Staffing, FY 2009, Federal-State operations & CSHO totals by state, FY 2009.

8 U.S. DOL, OSHA IMIS Inspection Reports, Nation by Region for 18(B) State (only) and/or Nation by Region for Federal (only), FY 2008.

9 Ranking based on best to worst (1=best; 50=worst)

Prepared by AFL-CIO Safety and Health, April 2009

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OP-ED: Drunk on The Tea-Bag Tax Craze

By Sam Pizzigati
Editor, Too Much

(PAI)--The tea bag tax protest on April 15 made a lot of noise and garnered a lot of television time -- especially on right-wing cable channels -- but is it the real story about taxes? A look at the numbers suggests it made no sense.

Tea bag organizers insisted America has become a tax-crazed country. But the federal tax burden on the typical American family, after the middle-income Obama tax cut enacted earlier this year, now stands under 5.9% of income, "only slightly higher than the all-time low of 5.3%," notes the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Even some conservative public policy stalwarts dissed the teabaggers. Bruce Bartlett, a former Reagan adviser, observed that tax revenues, as a percent of GDP, "will be lower this year than any year since 1950." He added: "The truth is that the U.S. is a relatively low-tax country no matter how you slice the data." Who benefits the most from these low taxes?

Next year, the last of the tax cuts enacted under former GOP President George W. Bush go fully into effect. The Bush cuts together will boost the after-tax incomes of households making over \$1 million by 7.7%. That's triple the increase on incomes that analysts forecast the average-income families

will see from Bush's cuts.

Congress could revoke those Bush tax cuts for the wealthy. Stopping them, the Tax Policy Center estimates, would up federal revenue by \$45 billion. But the Obama White House so far appears content to let the Bush tax cuts run their course -- and hike taxes on only incomes over \$250,000 after the Bush cuts expire at the end of 2010.

Among the groups mobilizing to end the Bush tax cuts now rather than later: Wealth for the Common Good, a new network of business leaders and affluent taxpayers who see "higher taxes on high incomes as fiscal medicine our nation needs to take."

Notes Edgar Bronfman, a leader in the push to hike the top tax rate on high incomes: "Most of us among the rich can afford to pay more taxes than we do." Continues the former Seagram CEO: "Now it's our turn to pay the piper and help build a more moral America."

In Europe, too, there's more sentiment for taxing the rich at higher rates. The votes have come in from the global readership of *The Economist*, the prestigious British business magazine -- and we have a winner in the magazine's just-completed online debate on taxing the wealthy.

By a narrow margin, its readers voted to support debater Thomas Piketty, the French economist who's calling for an 80% tax rate on income over \$1 million euros, the equivalent of \$1.3 million.

Piketty's opponent, Chris Edwards of the conservative Cato Institute, gave *The Economist* debate a bit of unintended hilarity in his closing statement. France's "high income and wealth taxes have led to a brain drain and a wealth drain," Edwards charged. The only actual example Edwards could cite: Aging rock star Johnny Hallyday who "fled to Switzerland in 2006 to avoid France's high taxes."

NOTE: Between 1979 and 2006, new data from the Congressional Budget Office show, the after-tax incomes of America's most affluent 1% rose 256%, after adjusting for inflation. Over the same period, notes an analysis of the CBO data by the Arloc Sherman of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, middle-income households saw a 21% increase. And those figures, including that small increase for the middle class -- a raise of less than 1% a year -- came before the Bush crash.

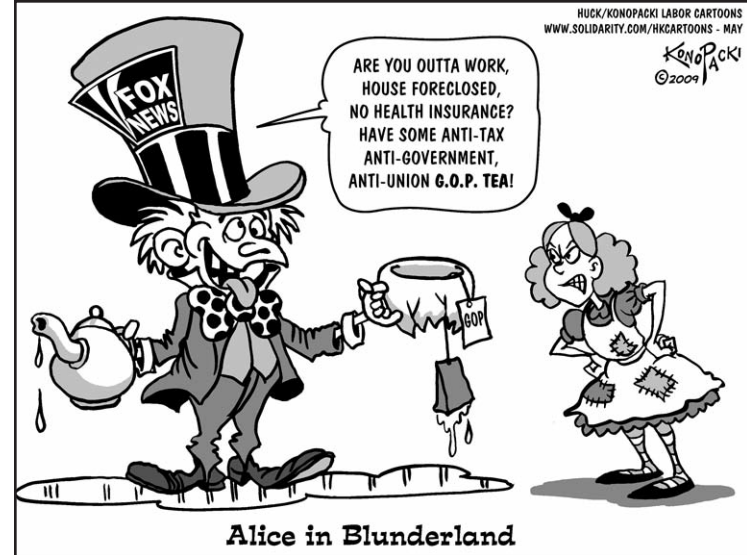
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At Goldman Sachs, the investment banking powerhouse, top execs have a habit of seldom saying what they really mean. Last fall, for instance, CEO Lloyd Blankfein announced he would not be taking any annual bonus beyond his base salary. Here's what they left out:

Last month, news reports revealed Blankfein pocketed over \$11 million from special private funds Goldman set up for Blankfein and other Goldman honchos. Now Blankfein is arguing the feds should let Goldman exit the Troubled Assets Relief Program (bailout) -- a move that would free Goldman from executive pay restrictions for 2009 -- because the bank is now operating profitably on its own again.

What's making Goldman profitable? One key factor: The 6-month-old Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. bailout program that lets banks like Goldman Sachs offer investors "interest rates several percentage points below prevailing market rates." Goldman has no intention of giving up this FDIC bailout subsidy.

What makes the FDIC aid so irresistible? It comes with no pay restrictions. Last year, 953 Goldman Sachs power suits took home over \$1 million each. Contrast that with the congressionally passed pay restrictions that Goldman, and the other banks that took the bailout cash, want to avoid.



Alice in Blunderland

Want a recession? Lower wages

Speaking at a New American Foundation forum in Washington, D.C., *Challenge* magazine editor Jeff Madrick pointed to low wages as a primary cause of the current recession. Today, a male in his thirties earns less after taxes than a male in his thirties earned in 1970. Wages for women have increased, but women have been closing a historical gap that separates them from male workers and continue to earn 80 percent of what their male counterparts earn.

"Keep in mind that our wages are no longer the highest in the world," Madrick said. "We were the highest in the world...but that ended thirty years ago. We became the biggest economy in the world with high wages, because high wages created demand without over-borrowing."

~www.washingtonspectator.com

Pay Equity: Ledbetter step #1

By Mark Gruenberg, PAI Staff Writer

Passage of the Lilly Ledbetter Act, restoring the right to sue by workers -- women, minorities and others -- who suffer pay discrimination on the job, is only the first step in attaining equal pay for equal work, advocates said. Speaking at events on April 27 marking Pay Equity Day, a panel led by Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., said putting teeth in a 46-year-old federal anti-pay discrimination law, and making pay comparisons easier are needed.

Pay Equity Day marks the day when median pay of a working woman in the U.S. equals that of a working man. Median pay for women stands at 78 cents for a man's dollar so Pay Equity Day usually falls in late April. But pay discrimination is worse than that because it builds and its impact is cumulative and large, as the Ledbetter case shows.

Lilly Ledbetter was a supervisor for 19 years in the Goodyear Tire and Rubber plant in Gadsden, Ala. She did not find out until near the end of her tenure that she was discriminated against in pay her whole career, with a resulting negative impact on her pension, health care and Social Security. She sued, won in lower courts, but federal law, pushed through by a Republican-run Congress, cut the money she should have gotten from \$3.5 million, which would have made a difference to a \$20 billion corporation, to \$350,000. Then the Supreme Court, in early 2007, threw out her right to sue altogether, except during a worker's first 180 days on the job.

The Lilly Ledbetter law, the first legislation signed by Democratic President Barack Obama, restored that right.

That's only the first step, DeLauro said. She has her own legislation pending, which she has championed for 12 years, to put teeth in federal pay equity statutes. Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, again introduced companion legislation.

DeLauro warned that "inertia is a powerful force" in Congress, even though her pay equity bill now has 231 co-sponsors. To garner support this year, DeLauro said, the measure has some modifications to cut down its impact on small businesses. She's also making the argument that pay equity is even more vital in the worst economic crash since the Great Depression.

That's because men have been the large majority of job losers since the slump started in Dec. 2007. The national jobless rate of 8.5% in March included an 8.8% jobless rate for adult men, compared to a 7% rate for adult women. The rate for women rose by 0.3% in one month, while men rose 0.7%.

"This is not a women's issue. It's about families," she said.

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Sen. Specter now a Democrat, but EFCA still in doubt without Franken

By Mark Gruenberg
PAI Staff Writer

WASHINGTON (PAI)-- Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., one of the last Republican moderates, announced April 28 he is immediately switching parties and will run for re-election next year as a Democrat. But one news report said the veteran lawmaker is not switching his position against halting the planned GOP filibuster against the Employee Free Choice Act. "As the Republican Party has moved farther and farther to the right, I have found myself to be more and more at odds with the Republican Party and more in tune with the Democratic Party," Specter explained.

The final straw, the 79-year-old veteran said, was Pennsylvania Republicans' hard-line opposition to the \$787 billion stimulus law the Democratic Obama administration got through Congress early this year, to help combat the worst economic slump since the Great Depression.

Specter and Maine's two Republican senators, Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins, provided the three key votes to halt the filibuster against that bill.

Specter's switch, combined with eventual victory by Democrat Al Franken in Minnesota's open Senate seat - a race now tied up in court -- would give Democrats and other labor allies the needed 60 votes to stop filibusters on a wide range of laws.

Specter's statement elated AFL-CIO Legislative Director Bill Samuel. "We look forward to continuing an open and honest debate with Sen. Specter about the issues important to Pennsylvania and America. We move forward with the understanding that America's workers support elected offi-

cialists based on their positions on issues that matter to working people, not political affiliations," Samuel said. "This is a new day for the Employee Free Choice Act and labor law reform. Specter has said all along he recognizes the need to reform our broken labor law system and we will continue to work with Congress to give workers back the freedom to form and join unions and pass legislation that stays true to the principles of the Employee Free Choice Act."

Specter switched parties after determining, following the final break with fellow Republicans over the stimulus law, that he would have little chance of winning next year's Pennsylvania GOP primary against Right Wing opposition. Tens of thousands of moderate Republicans in Pennsylvania switched party registration last year to vote for Democrats Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton in its presidential primary. They haven't switched back.

An influential Pennsylvania Democrat, state AFL-CIO President Bill George, welcomed Specter's switch, but with a caution light. He pointed out that Specter still has some ground to make up to get both the Democratic primary endorsement and the AFL-CIO's backing next year.

"We are hoping he will do that," George said of Specter switching positions on the Employee Free Choice Act, which the senator had co-sponsored until this year.

"First of all, we welcome him back to the Democratic Party," George said, harkening back to Specter switching from Democratic to Republican when he first sought elective office, as district attorney in Philadelphia approximately 40 years ago.

"He really came back because of the Right Wing slash-and-burn tactics and its intimidation -- and now he understands what workers go through in the workplace when they try to organize," George continued.

But George also called Pennsylvania a "moderate, moderate, moderate state" whose voters dislike the

extremes of the right and left. And George said Specter must shore up a voting record that shows him agreeing with the AFL-CIO on 68% of its key votes cast throughout his Senate career. The Pennsylvania Democratic average is 85%, George said.

"We hope he can side with Obama and" Senate Majority Leader Harry "Reid to pass

universal health care -- the Kennedy-Waxman bill or a modification of it -- that he can revisit trade legislation that would give working people a level playing field on international trade, and that, finally, he will reconsider his position on the Employee Free Choice Act," George concluded.

Specter and George will meet on it in early May.



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