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Obama proposes \$50 billion infrastructure bill

By John Wojcik



In his Labor Day speech to union members in Milwaukee the president, aiming for a serious reduction in the 9.6 percent unemployment rate, proposed a new \$50 billion road, rail and airport re-building plan.

“This will not only create jobs immediately, it’s also going to make our economy hum over the long haul,” Obama told 10,000 cheering union members.

Republicans immediately attacked the plan with House Minority leader John Boehner, R-Ohio describing it as a ‘doubling down’ on the first \$862 billion stimulus plan that he said was a “failure.”

Observers drew the connection between Republican opposition to infrastructure investment and the hope of big oil companies that they can avoid, as the president intends, their having to pay for infrastructure investment via reduced tax incentives. The initial \$50 billion for infrastructure would come, under the president’s proposal, by scaling back oil and gas industry tax incentives.

The president’s plan would not allow the companies to take advantage of a manufacturing tax credit they now get and it would also eliminate some of the deductions they currently claim on income earned overseas.

The White House plan would rebuild 150,000

miles of roads, construct 4,000 miles of rail and rehabilitate 150 miles of runway.

“It’s just the message I want to hear,” said Don Burmester, a member of the International Association of Machinists, Local 66 in Milwaukee. “We need to get regular people back to work. I’ve seen the other party put political games ahead of anything decent to make the president look bad. We need to get the focus back on the economy and away from the political games.”

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Most progressive commentators, including some who have criticized the president for moving too cautiously, applauded the proposal.

“President Obama finally began to vigorously push the kind of high-profile, re-build America infrastructure campaign that is absolutely essen-

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tial,” said Bob Herbert of the New York Times. “The details of the proposal are less important than whether the proposal itself is a sign that Mr. Obama and his party are ready, at long last, to engage this awful economy with a sense of urgency.”

Herbert said the plan was too late to help Democrats in November but could pay off for them later.

The Nobel prize-winning economist Paul Krugman was less excited about the proposal, saying, essentially, that although it was a “good idea,” the plan, itself, is “much too small” and that “it won’t pass anyway.” Given that last reality Krugman wrote: “It makes you wonder why the administration didn’t propose a much bigger plan.”

Salon’s Joan Walsh said, “It’s probably not big enough, and even this modest bill probably won’t get the Republican and conservative Democratic support it needs to pass. But it’s good to see the president acknowledge that the government has a responsibility to continue to spend its way out of this recession, and not merely hinge

his program on small business and research and development tax cuts.”

The president outlined a proposal for \$200 billion in business tax cuts on Sept. 7. It would allow businesses to write off 100 percent of new investments in plants and equipment made between now and the end of 2011. While conservative economists and outlets like the Wall Street Journal are backing the plan, labor-backed economists are not as supportive.

Robert Reich, Secretary of Labor during the Clinton administration, ripped the president’s plan for the investment tax breaks, saying, “Big corporations are investing in automated equipment, robotics, numerically-controlled machine tools, and software. These investments are designed to boost profits by permanently replacing workers and cutting payrolls. The tax breaks Obama is proposing would make such investments all the more profitable.”



John Wojcik writes for the People’s World.

The urgency of Nov. 2

By PW Editorial Board

Right wing extremism is gathering strength and becoming more extreme. Rush Limbaugh and other like-minded extremists are no longer on the fringe of the Republican Party, but comfortably nestle in its mainstream and shape its policies.

This march from the margins to mainstream by these amplifiers of hate, lies, resentment and unapologetic racism should compel us to rethink the coming elections and their importance. The Nov. 2 elections -- and the presidential elections in two years -- acquire a new and overriding urgency.

If the Republican Party, weighted now in a more reactionary and authoritarian direction, gains control of the House and gathers momentum going into the 2012 elections, stormy days and difficult times are ahead not only for the Obama administration and the Democrats in Congress, but also for the American people, already locked into a protracted and deep economic crisis.

The terrain, on which they will fight, will no

longer tilt in their favor. They will be running uphill. And the window of opportunity that opened up in 2008 will be nearly shut. For how long, no one knows.

Frustration with the pace and depth of change is understandable. After all, it’s hard to be sober minded when you are out of a job or can’t pay for groceries and medical care or face eviction from the home that you lived in your entire adult life. Yet, anger and frustration cannot substitute for a well-reasoned action plan to meet present and future challenges.

The struggle to defeat the newest and more dangerous edition of right-wing extremism at the ballot box in November is the key link to open new vistas of freedom in every field of struggle, including jobs and equality.

The time to fight juiced-up, right-wing extremism is now when it still doesn’t control every lever of political power, not later when it does. And the immediate place to fight it is at the ballot box in November.

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NY leads the way for 'One Nation' rally

By Dan Margolis

Based on the mobilization in New York alone, it appears likely that the One Nation rally in Washington D.C. on October 2nd could be an overwhelming success.

According to Cheryl McCants, spokesperson for this city's rally organizing committee, "Here in New York State alone we're mobilizing over 1,000 busloads - that we know of."

Given an average of 40 or 50 people per bus, that estimate would mean at least 40,000 to 50,000 people - from only one state and only one form of transportation. In addition, says McCants, there are other buses coming from around New York that are being organized by local groups or individuals and aren't known to the organizing committee.

"And," she continued, "there are going to be several thousand folks who are going to be traveling on their own as well, whether by plane, train or automobile as well as the buses, so there will be a huge contingency and a very large representation of New Yorkers."

The rally, which is being organized by a coalition of labor and community organizations both national and local, has received support and assistance from a number of political leaders, including City Council members filling their own buses.

On September 2, the organizing committee held a major rally on Wall Street against unemployment. Hundreds of people turned out. Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., the New York NAACP's Hazel Dukes and other representatives of labor and community organizations spoke.

Rangel told the crowd that those attending the march would remember it, that it would be something about which they told their grandchildren, and compared "One Nation" to the famous civil rights-era march from Selma to Montgomery.



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"What made America great are jobs and dreams and aspirations, not just for us, but for our children," Rangel added. "People come from all over the world, because they know what we got is pride, self esteem, paying rent, paying mortgages, sending our kids off to school." He said the "One Nation" was part of the fight to bring back that spirit.

Dukes said that the extreme right had been doing all it could to stop any progress being made in the fight against poverty and joblessness. That, she added, is a main reason why Rangel has been under fire. She called on those gathered to go back to their communities and tell people, "America will stand, black and white, brown and yellow; all of us will stand together." McCants says that the organizing committee is planning a host of events, including an outreach specifically to young people at a downtown pub. There, elected officials, including Bill DeBlasio, the city's Public Advocate, will speak. "This is a true grassroots movement from all walks of life, regardless of your race, your ethnicity, your religious beliefs, your sexual orientation, your gender identity," McCants said.

The One Nation rally in Washington D.C. on October 2nd could be an overwhelming success.

Strickland blasts GOP “monkey business” opponent

By Dan Margolis

Blasting his Republican opponent as someone who “only cares about Wall St.,” Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland rallied labor supporters in Cleveland to mobilize for the crucial November elections.

Speaking at United Steelworkers Local 979 hall, Strickland told a gathering of steelworkers, painters and laborers that unlike contests where differences are small, “I flat out disagree with John Kasich on every issue.”

Kasich, a former congressman and a managing director of Lehman Brothers prior to its collapse, has run innumerable TV ads noting that during Strickland’s time as governor Ohio lost 400,000 jobs.

“Actually,” Strickland said, “the U.S. lost 8.5 million jobs. But this is not because of policies in Columbus, Ohio. It was caused by the policies of Bush and Cheney and the shenanigans on Wall Street.”

The collapse of Lehman Brothers was a key part of this, Strickland charged. “It was the largest bankruptcy in history and it cost Ohio pension plans \$400 million.”

Kasich, however, did not suffer, Strickland pointed out. “He got a \$400,000 bonus.”

“Kasich says he should be elected because he has business knowledge,” Strickland said. “Lehman Brothers cooked the books. They deceived investors. What he knows is monkey business.”

“He calls for eliminating the state income tax, which accounts for 46 percent of

Obama defenderá propuestas económicas

Por Julie Pace

El presidente Barack Obama defenderá tres propuestas económicas y patentizará su más acérrima oposición a prolongar las exenciones fiscales para ciertos estadounidenses aprobadas por su predecesor George W. Bush.

La Casa Blanca dijo que el nuevo plan de estímulo de obras públicas y exenciones fiscales a ciertas empresas será descrito por el mandatario en un discurso que pronunciará en Cleveland, con la esperanza de apuntalar la economía a largo plazo y cierta creación de empleo a corto plazo.

Empero, ante los comicios legislativos de noviembre, no está claro si el Congreso quiera aprobar este tipo de iniciativas a tiempo para ayudar al repunte económico - y a los demócratas - antes de las elecciones.

Obama pedirá al Congreso que considere tres propuestas:

- na inversión de 50.000 millones de dólares en proyectos de infraestructura y reparación de obras públicas.
- Una extensión permanente de las exenciones fiscales para las empresas por investigación y desarrollo.
- Exenciones fiscales para que las empresas pueda acelerar la depreciación al 100% de sus inversiones en nuevas plantas y utillaje hasta fines del 2011.

Los funcionarios gubernamentales dijeron que las tres propuestas

integrarán el nuevo plan de estímulo económico que anunciará el presidente antes de noviembre, eliminando la posibilidad de que puedan ser congelados antes de esa fecha los impuestos de la seguridad social, idea respaldada por muchos empresarios.

Las fuentes, que hablaron a condición de guardar el anonimato por no haber formulado aún el mandatario su propuesta, dijeron que Obama contrastará su plan económico con el de los republicanos, acudiendo incluso para ello a la misma ciudad en la que el líder de la minoría en la Cámara de Representantes, John Boehner, anunció el mes pasado la agenda económica de su partido.

En el Día de Trabajo el presidente Obama instó a efectuar inversiones a largo plazo en las carreteras, líneas férreas y aeropuertos que costarían al menos 50.000 millones de dólares, como parte de su compromiso para encontrar nuevas vías para estimular la economía.

La secretaria del Trabajo, Hilda Solís dijo en una entrevista transmitida por la cadena CBS que el plan de Obama “pondría a los trabajadores de la construcción, soldadores, electricistas, de vuelta al trabajo... gente que ha estado desempleada por mucho tiempo”.

Con el aumento del desempleo a 9,6 por ciento, el presidente se comprometió a presentar una serie de medidas para estimular la economía.

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