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GOP pushes closer to a government shutdown

By John Wojcik



Democratic lawmakers and others warned that as Republicans continue to play their dangerous game of “chicken” with the federal budget and debt ceiling, the chances of avoiding a government shutdown in five days are becoming slimmer and slimmer.

“House Republicans are actually determined to shut down the government if they can’t defund Obamacare,” declared Rep. Frank Pallone, D-N.J., last night on national television. Pallone issued his warning on MSNBC’s Rachel Maddow Show: “They are determined to shut down the government despite widespread bipartisan disagreement by the American people.”

The union that represents millions of federal government workers, AFGE, said yesterday that it is in full mobilization mode against the impending shutdown. The federal government employs 2.15 million workers nationwide, with the Postal Service employing another 590,000. The union says the government will declare almost all the federal workers “non-essential,” sending them home in event of a government shutdown.

“It’s like taking the government employees hostage and saying, ‘We won’t let them come to work unless we’re given what we want,’” said Charles Teifer, law professor at the University of

Baltimore and former deputy general counsel of the U.S. House of Representatives. “It’s taking a couple of million of government employees hostage.”

Washington D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray (D), whose city budget must be approved by Congress, declared yesterday, in an effort to prevent his city from grinding to a halt next week, that every D.C. worker is “essential.” A shutdown would send home the 32,000 people who keep the nation’s

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capital running every day.

One of the many but less-talked about effects of a shutdown will be its toll on the civil rights and the workplace rights of all Americans.

“A government shutdown means no Equal Employment Opportunities Commission to en-

80 percent of Americans say threatening a government shutdown is not an acceptable way to negotiate.

force the Civil Rights Act and the other laws barring workplace discrimination,” said Gabrielle Martin, president of AFGE’s National Council of Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Locals. The last time Republicans shut down the government was in 1995. Americans blamed them, not then-President Clinton for the shutdown by huge margins. The following year, Clinton was re-elected despite Republican majorities in both houses of Congress.

With the shutdown now looming, Americans say overwhelmingly that it is unacceptable for either a president or members of Congress to threaten a government shutdown in order to achieve their goals, according to a new CBS/New York Times poll.

Eighty percent of Americans say threatening a government shutdown is not an acceptable way to negotiate; only 16 percent think it is. Majorities of Democrats, Republicans, and independents all agreed that shutdown of government is not a way to negotiate.

While shutdowns have been threatened and have actually happened before, this one is seen as radically different. For the first time ever, the shutdown threat is being used as a tool to achieve

repeal of duly-passed legislation (Obamacare).

“This seems quite beyond the pale,” said Sarah Binder, a political science professor at George Washington University. “It seems that during most of these previous (shutdown) episodes, an agreement was in theory within reach, because the players were at the table. The previous shutdowns tended to occur in the midst of negotiations. That doesn’t seem to be the case this time.”

Louis Fisher, who has specialized in separation of powers over more than 30 years at the Congressional Research Service and the Library of Congress said he was “shocked” when he first saw what he now recognizes as a foreshadowing of today’s crisis, when Republican senators refused for two years to confirm Richard Cordray - or anyone else, for that matter - to run the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau unless President Obama agreed to change the bureau’s structure. “That’s really amazing, to say you’re not going to confirm unless the underlying statute or law is rewritten. That’s breathtaking to me.”



John Wojcik co-edits Peoplesworld.org.

Obama at the UN

By PW Editorial Board

President Obama strained in his United Nations speech to explain the rationale behind U.S. foreign policy.

It was a curious and contradictory spectacle as the president who brought home the troops from Iraq and Afghanistan in the same breath defended his administration’s indefensible actions in Libya, drone warfare, and NSA spying on citizen and ally alike.

Had not regime change occurred in Libya under the guise of humanitarian intervention? Wasn’t the visit of Brazil’s president postponed in outrage over NSA spying? Have there not been untold civilian casualties from drone attacks? And yet the president sought to cast away charges of imperialism and empire with rhetorical “we’re-the-good guy” asides even as he revealed one of the underlying bases of U.S. foreign policy: “The United States of America is prepared to use all elements of our power, including military force, to secure our core interests in the region,” asserted the president. “We will ensure the free flow of en-

ergy from the region to the world.” A more blatant exposition of U.S. imperialist oil interests is hard to find.

Note must be taken of the president’s positive response to overtures from Iran and highlighting the need for a solution to the Israel/Palestine conflict with a two-state solution. Regarding the crime of nerve gas in Syria, however, the president while pledging continuing diplomacy maintained the now usual military bluster. For lasting peace to be achieved the U.S. ship of state must be turned around. A first step should be away from an unconditional defense of American exceptionalism. Yes there are many exceptional things about the U.S. including this president’s election, a point noted by the Nobel Committee, which awarded the then new incumbent its Peace Prize. Our exceptionalness however hardly stands alone.

Each country contributes an exceptional thread to the fabric of humanity. It’s time for the U.S. to blend in, Mr. President, not stand out and alone.

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West Hollywood first city to ban sale of fur

By Blake Deppe



For the first time in this country's history, the Californian city of West Hollywood has banned the sale of fur, in keeping with its tradition of upholding the values of animals and their wellbeing. Though city council members passed the law by unanimous vote two years ago, it finally went into effect last week on Sept. 21.

The development came days after the city passed an ordinance banning all entertainment acts, including circuses, that use wild or exotic animals, making this a twin victory for animal rights supporters and activists.

It follows a history of pro-animal legislation in West Hollywood, including the banning of steel-jaw traps and cosmetic testing on animals in 1989; the banning of cat de-clawing in 2003; and the banning of the retail sale of cats and dogs in 2010, which pushed people to adopt from animal shelters instead. It seems that the city is well on its way toward achieving its purported mission of becoming "the Humane Capitol of the Nation."

Retail stores will have to clear fur products off their shelves by Sept. 28 or face \$800 fines. Predictably, many are decrying the ordinance, with Mayfair House, a specialty clothing store on Beverly Blvd., going as far as to claim it is "unconstitutional." Store owner Johanna Judah thought

the ordinance was "ill-considered ... and harmful to the city and its consumer citizens and business residents," as well as a supposed attempt by animal rights activists to "impose their will over others."

Mayor pro tempore John D'Amico argued that there is no ethical way to produce fur, and that the ban will ultimately not harm businesses. "This city is not in the business of curtailing businesses," he said. "Someone who is disconnected from the goals of the city and has a rigid point of view on fur" may not understand that.

Some business owners, however, do understand, and support the ban. One of them is David Malvaney, cofounder of Church Boutique, an avant-garde fashion shop. "We are on board with the ban," he said, "as we understand the concerns and have realized there are many other fabrics and fibers that can easily take the place of real fur. We feel that the desire for real fur will lessen over time as more people become aware of the process to which the animals are subjected, and I believe more cities will adopt a similar ordinance."

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D.C. unions condemn Walmart vote

By Mark Gruenberg

The leader of Washington, D.C.'s Central Labor Council says union members and workers citywide will remember which city council members voted for Walmart in upholding Mayor Vincent Gray's veto of legislation requiring a \$12.50 minimum wage for workers at non-union big box retailers in the Nation's Capital.

The council initially passed the Large Retailer Accountability Act, 8-5. Passage led Walmart, the monster anti-worker retailer, to threaten to cancel its planned six stores in poor neighborhoods. Walmart is known for its vicious anti-worker actions, its labor law-breaking, low prices, and its notoriously low wages and benefits. But it claims to create jobs - a claim unions and their allies say studies disprove.

Walmart's jobs claim swayed Gray, a Democrat. The override vote on Sept. 17 was 7-6, with nine votes needed to overturn his veto.

D.C. Labor Council President Jocelyn Williams said "While we thank those who stood with workers, those who did not must know that their actions will have consequences."

And the Washington Post reported that supporters of the law, who jammed the council chambers for the vote, chanted "We won't forget!" and "Recall!" Several, while leaving the room, stopped to point at Wells and Bowser, while holding signs that said "My next mayor supports the Large Retailer Accountability Act."

Lucha a favor de manifestantes por \$15

Por Kelly Sinclair y Texas Media Collec-

Lucha a favor de manifestantes - Por la Calle Guadalupe los trabajadores de restaurantes de comida rápida marcharon, no lejos de la cuna de los trabajadores de "cuellos blancos" de la Universidad de Texas. Un grupo sirve al otro, en más de una manera, pero los manifestantes atrajeron las bocinazos de apoyo de los automobiles que pasaban, y los apaludos de los espectadores.

Una multitud de más de 150 personas hacían el grito de los manifestantes de "Luchar por los 15". Quince dólares como salario de trabajo. El derecho a organizarse sin represalias de sus empleadores. El derecho a la dignidad y condiciones seguras de trabajo. Estos son los derechos básicos del trabajador, logrados por una lucha fuerte del movimiento laboral, pero malamente erosionados en décadas por las ventajas corporativas contra la parte menos poderosa de la fuerza trabajadora.

El gobiernofederal, encargado por velar las condiciones del lugar de trabajo, ha puesto la mínima atención. Este ataque de doble golpe, sin embargo ha llevado a un gran logro: Ha encendido la oposición de una generación de grupos ciudadanos y activistas que abogan por los trabajadores, muchas veces juntos a los sindicatos existentes.

Amulio Manriquez, un coordinador con el Proyecto de Defensa de los Trabajadores, dijo, "Estamos aquí hoy en solidaridad con los trabajadores de

comidas rápidas porque el trabajador merece un salario justo y dignidad y poder cuidar a su familia. Mucha gente en este país no son capaces de hacerlo ahora aunque supuestamente este es el más rico del mundo.

Los organizadores repartieron pamfletos que explican la causa. Grupos participantes que apoyan a los huelguistas incluían al AFL-CIO de Texas, el Concilio Central de Austin, el SEIU, AFT de Texas, IBEW, Sindicato de Pintores, El Proyecto de Derechos Civiles de Texas, Las Panteras Grises, Proyecto en Defensa de los Trabajadores, Ocupar a Austin, y el Gremio nacional de abogados, que proveyo apoyo legal.

De acuerdo al Bureau of Labor Statistics, el salario corriente federal es \$7.25, mientras el salario promedio del trabajador de comida rápida del centro de Texas hacia \$8.33 por hora en 2012. Para alguien que trabaja a tiempo completo, que sale a \$15,080 y \$18,366.40 respectivamente, antes de impuestos cada año, o \$290 y \$353.20 por semana.

Contrario, el salario promedio de los trabajadores del area de Austin, independientemente de la industria, es mucho más alto - \$17.12.

"El Uno Por Ciento necesita regresar algo", Manriquez, señaló, "porque sin esta gente nada funcionaría, nada se construiría, nadie tendría alimento. Ellos deben tener una parte justa del pastel".