

# PEOPLE'S WORLD

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## San Francisco Symphony musicians ratify new contract

By Marilyn Bechtel

**A**fter an 18-day strike, the musicians of the San Francisco Symphony ratified a new 26-month contract April 13, including a 4.5 percent salary increase that raises the annual base salary from \$141,700 to \$148,200.

Musicians initially called for a 15 percent pay hike to keep up with the Bay Area's high cost of living; management had offered 2 percent.

The musicians, members of the American Federation of Musicians Local 6, overcame draconian proposals to slash pay of substitutes and extras. They defeated efforts to create a tiered workforce with substitute and extra musicians paid less for performing the same job.

Though the musicians kept the medical plan in which most orchestra members are enrolled, they will have to pay more out-of-pocket. Orchestra members said that, and "minimal changes" in working conditions, amount to a net pay cut.

The musicians also defeated a proposal to raise the minimum retirement age to 65, from the present 62. "We are very happy to be bringing our music back to the stage at Davies Symphony Hall," negotiating committee head David Gaudry, a violinist, said in a statement.

Gaudry said that over the course of the talks, "musicians were told repeatedly that we must ac-



cept deep cuts and freezes and the concept of a 'net-savings' contract, despite the financial health of the organization. It was not until we went on strike that we were able to achieve a settlement that did not move us too far backwards in terms of wages and benefits."

In contesting management's claims of financial hardship, the players cited the orchestra's endowment - at near \$300 million the second largest in the country. They pointed out that management

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spent \$11 million on a centennial celebration last year, and plans to spend as much as \$500,000 on expanding the orchestra's home auditorium, Davies Symphony Hall.

The strike by the San Francisco symphony's musicians was one in a series of recent labor dis-

**The strike was one in a series of recent labor disputes affecting symphony musicians around the country.**

putes affecting symphony musicians around the country, as orchestra managements, pleading loss of revenue during the Great Recession, sought concessions from players. The most drastic situation is that of the Minneapolis Orchestra's musicians, locked out since Oct. 1.

The musicians say they are being asked to agree to pay cuts of 30-50 percent as well as health care cost hikes amounting to \$5,000 to \$8,000 a year per musician. The management proposal would cut the orchestra's size significantly and make over 250 changes to the contract - cuts the musicians say would "negatively impact the orchestra's quality and greatly diminish its product, making it impossible to attract or retain the finest musicians."

In a letter to the Minnesota Orchestra's CEO, Michael Henson, earlier this month, the orchestra's negotiating committee pointed out that musicians have offered several proposals that management has rejected, including binding arbitration and play-and-talk with a no-strike guarantee.

"Since April 2012," the musicians wrote, "you have demanded \$5 million in annual reductions

from the musicians. Without input from the community, you have insisted on an overreaching and draconian reduction in the orchestra's budget and scope that would destroy the world-class standing of the orchestra as we know it. You have not moved from that position."

They also noted that the musicians voluntarily gave back \$4.5 million in contract concessions in 2009, and management rejected their offer of further concessions in 2010.

Their sister Twin Cities ensemble, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra - also locked out Oct. 1 - recently reached a tentative agreement.

In Atlanta, Ga., symphony musicians were summarily locked out after they proposed to take an 11 percent pay cut if senior management staff would do the same. They later agreed to accept a significant pay cut as well as reduction of the orchestra's membership from 93 to 88 musicians. Senior management also took a 6 percent cut in pay.



**Marilyn Bechtel writes for Peoplesworld.org.**

## **Chaos, then inspiration after bombing**

By PW Editorial Board

**T**he People's World staff adds its condolences to the victims and their families of yesterday's despicable bombings at the Boston Marathon. More than 170 people are injured with 17 in critical condition. Many lost their limbs in what Massachusetts General's Dr. Alasdair Conn called, "traumatic amputations." Three lost their lives, including an 8-year-old boy from Dorchester, Mass., Martin Richard. Reportedly, after his father, Bill, crossed the finish line, Martin ran to hug him. It was just after that embrace when the first bomb went off, killing Martin. His sister and mother were injured.

We condemn, in no uncertain terms, this and other such terrorist attacks. The last leg of the marathon was dedicated to Newtown, Conn., and the victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre. That should give us pause. Bombings, shootings, drug war, hot wars, maybe the time has come to confront the culture, causes and cycle of violence!

The bravery of the first responders, whether public workers, runners, fans or race volunteers, in rushing toward those who were hurt and towards the explosion, smoke and chaos is to be saluted and recognized. Thank you for showing the best side of humanity amidst the worst. As the Communist Party said in its statement, "The spirit of cooperation and community in the face of violence is our greatest asset." It's through those actions and impulses that we can tackle the complexities of violence.

Lastly, we look to and celebrate the spirit of the marathon athletes. Tens of thousands train tenaciously for the opportunity to run in one of the world's greatest races. Maybe because they love running, maybe to overcome a health crisis, maybe they have something to prove, like they can run 26.2 miles at, say, age 78; for whatever reason, those women and men - older and younger - first-timers or elite athletes who train for such a race, your toughness and resilience inspires all.

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# Ohio seniors blast Social Security cuts

By Bruce Bostick

Meeting in Columbus, Ohio on April 9, the 300 delegates to the Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) greeted the president's announcement that his proposed budget would propose cuts to Social Security with outrage.

After many angry comments from the floor, a proposal that Ohio ARA support a petition against the Ryan budget was changed to support for a new petition that demanded no cuts to Social Security. That resolution was adopted unanimously.

"Nobody likes that Ryan budget," stated Keith Bailey, IUE retiree from Dayton, "but we felt we had to state that we weren't anyone's pawn. We don't care who proposes it, if they want to cut the most successful federal program in our nation's history, that didn't add one penny to the deficit, then we'll stand up together and tell them---no way!"

The resolution opposing any cuts to Social Security also stated that the cap on Social Security taxes, now at \$113,000, should be eliminated, so that the wealthy pay their fair share. The resolution was sent to the president, as well as all of Ohio's congressional and senate reps.

President Obama's budget proposal, which contains proposals to cut the size cost of living adjustments to seniors receiving Social Security has been greeted with anger and frustration by



had dropped off petitions opposing those cuts, signed by over two million, at the White House earlier that day.

"Retiree security has become a misnomer," said Norm Wernet, Ohio ARA President. "Unfortunately, the president's proposal feeds into the lie being pushed by corporations and Republicans in congress that Social Security is part of the problem. It isn't! We've paid into Social Security, just like we've paid into our pensions, only to have many of them stolen. The president has done some good things, and we support them, but his proposal to cut Social Security would hurt retirees, hurt retiree security, undermine that program and would hurt the entire economy. We will oppose any proposal that does that!"

Ohio AFL-CIO President Tim Burga thanked the delegates for helping defeat Senate Bill 5, the GOP-backed proposal that would've curtailed public worker's bargaining rights in the state. The effort was led by a huge labor-led coalition, called 'We Are Ohio.' "That fight," Burga stated, "was forged through struggle and powered by unity!"

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## Stopping blight in LA

By Rossana Cambron

**T**he fight to stop foreclosures and make the banks pay continued recently, as across the nation, groups gathered to symbolically deliver 330,000 signatures on a petition calling on the Obama administration to reject U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder's declaration that some financial institutions are too big to jail.

The complete set of more than a quarter million signatures was delivered in Washington DC. Declaring that no one is above the law, the petition demands banks be held accountable for the crimes they committed against homeowners all across the country.

In Los Angeles, groups from the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), Good Jobs LA, and Service Employees International Union Local 721 went into a downtown Wells Fargo bank delivering trash from a home on which the bank had foreclosed. They demanded the bank maintain foreclosed homes to prevent neighborhood blight.

Los Angeles City Council members were also visited to urge them to take a vote and put a stop to neighborhood blight by the banks.

Angelina, an ACCE member, said she parks her car in the driveway of a foreclosed home next to hers, to keep squatters from coming in and destroying the property, which would lower her property value and that of the entire neighborhood.

Los Angeles has not fined a single bank and has lost an estimated \$45 million in violation fees for 2012 alone.

## Los beneficios de nuevos estándares de emisiones de vehículos

Por Javier Sierra

**L**a Asociación Pulmonar Americana (ALA) ha publicado un detallado análisis de los beneficios de los nuevos estándares de emisiones de carros y camionetas anunciado por la EPA la semana pasada, y los resultados son extraordinarios.

El reporte sobre los nuevos estándares —los cuales ya se encuentran en su periodo de consultas y opiniones previos a su emisión definitiva— llega, entre otras, a las siguientes conclusiones:

Evitarán más de 2,200 muertes prematuras y 15,000 ataques de asma debido a contaminación de materia particulada. Evitarán más de 320 muertes prematuras y 650 hospitalizaciones por problemas respiratorios debido a la contaminación de ozono. Evitarán la pérdida de más de 3.3 millones de días laborales y escolares.

La ALA resalta que la carga de la contaminación vehicular no es equitativa, sino que la sufren desproporcionadamente las personas de bajos ingresos que se ven obligadas a vivir cerca de superautopistas y carreteras de tráfico denso. “Casi el 17% de las viviendas del país están a menos de 300 pies de una gran autovía, ferrocarril o aeropuerto, donde las concentraciones de contaminantes dañinos son más probables que en zonas más retiradas”, indica el informe. “Más de 16.9 millones de norteamericanos que cumplen con la definición federal de pobreza viven en zonas de altos niveles de ozono”.

Asimismo, el reporte concluye que las personas que padecen asma,

enfermedades pulmonares obstructivas crónicas, males cardiovasculares y diabetes —problemas que la comunidad hispana tiende a sufrir desproporcionadamente— son especialmente vulnerables a la contaminación vehicular. Según el Departamento de Salud y Servicios Humanos:

En 2010, unos 3,600,000 hispanos sufrían de asma. Los hispanos tienen un 30% más de probabilidades de ser hospitalizados por asma que el norteamericano promedio. Los niños hispanos tienen un 40% más de probabilidades de morir de asma que el niño norteamericano promedio. Los hispanos de descendencia puertorriqueña y mexicana son especialmente vulnerables al asma debido a condiciones genéticas.

Una vez que se declaren definitivamente, los nuevos estándares obligarán a las refinerías a reducir el nivel de los compuestos de azufre en la gasolina y a los fabricantes de vehículos a usar tecnología avanzada para limitar las emisiones tóxicas.

“La mejor noticia es que los beneficios empezarán a notarse tan pronto como la gasolina se limpie, incluso antes de que se fabriquen vehículos más limpios”, agrega el estudio.

El reporte, titulado “Un Centavo para la Prevención: En Defensa de Estándares de Gasolina y Vehículos Más Limpios”, resalta que todos estos beneficios para la salud y la economía del país nos costarían solo un centavo de dólar por galón de gasolina.

De hecho, según el estudio, los beneficios económicos anuales de poner estos estándares en práctica se elevarían hasta \$19,000 millones.

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