

PEOPLE'S WORLD

www.peoplesworld.org July 6, 2013

“Women power” blocks anti-abortion bill

By Kelly Sinclair

A severe anti-abortion bill in the Texas Legislature went down to defeat June 25 thanks in part to a 10-hour filibuster by state Senator Wendy Davis of Fort Worth.

Viewers across the country witnessed Davis's gritty performance on live streaming video. It came at the end of a special session called by Republican Gov. Rick Perry.

Despite polls in the state showing that most Texans are pro-choice, Democrats in the state Senate didn't have the votes to stop the bill, SB 5, which would have effectively closed most clinics providing abortions in the state - adding yet another burden to the working poor. The only tactic left to opponents of the bill was the filibuster.

The victory, however, is short-lived. Perry has called for another special legislative session to reconsider the proposal on July 1.

While an inspiring figure in this struggle, Davis didn't stand alone. Among her fellow state senators, Leticia Van de Putte, a San Antonio Democrat, could have been forgiven for not taking part. Earlier that day, she had attended her father's funeral. But Van de Putte chose to be there and speak out.

Using tactics even a fellow Republican called



“sketchy,” Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst concocted three violations supposedly involved in Davis's filibuster, and tried to use those supposed violations to end her filibuster. Her supporters on the floor raised various parliamentary points, trying to extend their defense of Texas women to past the midnight voting deadline.

Twenty minutes before midnight, Van de Putte, who had been struggling to have her voice heard, finally said, “At what point must a female

T H I S W E E K :

- “Women power” blocks anti-abortion bill
- Supreme racism guts voting rights
- “Moral Monday” protests right-wing agenda
- Inmigración: Los múltiples peligros del Acta “SAFE”
- Detroit protests tar sands facilities

READ MORE NEWS AND OPINION DAILY AT WWW.PEOPLESWORLD.ORG

senator raise her hand or her voice to be recognized over her male colleagues in the room?”

In an electric moment, onlookers in the gallery rose. They burst into claps, then cheers, and finally a nonstop roar.

Rattled by hearing what actual Texans

Polls in the state show that most Texans are pro-choice.

thought of their shenanigans, Republican state senators clustered near the podium and tried to cram the vote through.

McAllen state Senator Chuy Hinojosa, a Democrat, caught the Republicans trying to change the post-midnight time-stamped recorded vote from June 26 to June 25. Unable to slide the faked record past alert Democrats, Republicans finally ran out of tricks. At 3 a.m., Dewhurst admitted from the podium that the vote had been too late.

People's World spoke to several of the hundreds of supporters who had been present in the gallery and lined up in the halls outside during the filibuster. They described the mood as upbeat, peaceful and united. The protest continued even after those in the gallery were sent by state troopers outside the chambers.

"It was nerve-wracking and intense not knowing what was going on with the bill," said young activist Amber Hoffman.

"Even after clapping, yelling, stomping, and chanting for two hours, the crowds were going strong. We were not going to back down. I think we definitely let them know how we felt and what we wanted."

Lt. Gov. Dewhurst later described the protestors as "an unruly mob, using Occupy Wall Street tactics." Viewers seeing the live stream saw something quite different: law-abiding citizens, rising in nonviolent opposition.

In response to Dewhurst's claim, Hoffman said, "They gave us a lot of credit for the scene we made, which was very impromptu, and I think was very successful."

Said one activist, who asked not to be identified, "The old white men are circling the wagons. They are so scared of women and what the majority of Texans want. They are losing their hold on power and they know it."

With the defacto abortion ban likely to be approved in the next special session, Texans are also faced with another restriction pushed by conservatives on the state level as well as those on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Supreme Court justices in recent days threw out part of the Voting Rights Act, which has the effect of activating Texas's controversial voter ID law.



Kelly Sinclair writes for Peoplesworld.org.

Supreme racism guts voting rights

By PW Editorial

The 30-year project of the GOP to crush civil rights took a qualitative leap forward when the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in a 5-4 decision announced on June 25.

Outrageously, Chief Justice John Roberts trampled the legacy of King and the civil rights movement by citing Selma, Ala., and Philadelphia, Miss., where blood was spilled to uphold the right to vote, in his majority opinion discarding a crucial section of the Voting Rights.

The court's majority lied to America about both the past and the present, presenting a mythology of a "post-racial" society and scolding Congress for voting by large bipartisan majorities in 2006 to reauthorize the law. The ruling claimed that the nine Southern states and numerous counties that the law singles out for special attention had changed and therefore don't need to be "precleared" by the Department of Justice before changing any voting law, district or procedure. The reality, as Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

pointed out in her dissent, is that whatever positive changes have happened in those states is in part because of the existence of the Voting Rights Act.

Throwing out the law's provisions, Ginsburg said, makes as much sense as throwing away an umbrella because it keeps you dry. Republicans, hell-bent on suppressing the vote, have continued to create new schemes. Gerrymandering, voter ID laws, restrictions on voter registration drives, disenfranchisement of ex-felons - all these are not of the past. These are the new poll taxes aimed at Black, Latinos, Native and Asian Americans, immigrants, college students, seniors and low-income voters. On Aug. 24, people will gather at the Lincoln Memorial to "realize" King's freedom dream. This 50th Anniversary March on Washington takes on additional importance given the Supreme Court's evisceration of the law won by struggle and sacrifice.

Congress - even in its dysfunctional state - needs to be pressured to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act.

Congress - even in its dysfunctional state - needs to be pressured to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act.

“Moral Monday” protests right-wing agenda

By Harvey Smith

A multi-racial crowd of over 2,500 people rallied outside the North Carolina State Legislature Building on Monday, June 24. 120 activists were arrested in an act of civil disobedience. The focus of this eighth “Moral Monday” was women and the labor movement.

The protests have been organized by the state NAACP along with other civil rights, labor and immigration rights groups, in response to the sharp rightward shift in the state’s politics that occurred in 2010. That is when, for the first time in more than 100 years, Republicans took control of both the House and the Senate. With redistricting, the Republicans increased their majority in 2012, and Republican Pat McCrory, the former mayor of Charlotte, was elected governor.

Addressing the crowd, the Rev. William J. Barber, president of the state’s NAACP and leader of the Moral Monday campaign, said, “This isn’t a Democratic or Republican Party thing, this is a people movement, led by workers, black, white, brown, old and young, straight, LGBT, religious, atheists, and everything in between.” One of the highlights of the rally was when Rev. Barber hushed the crowd and then turned to the media and politicians being interviewed at the back of the stage. He asked them to stop, saying, “This isn’t a party. This is serious and this is about the workers and people in trouble.” His statement was greeted with applause and cheers.



Carolina is grim. The state has the fifth highest unemployment rate in the country. This week the General Assembly (House and Senate) voted not to extend unemployment compensation, which will cut benefits for 17,000 people.

Currently 25 percent of children live in poverty and 23 percent of women have no health insurance. Gov. McCrory has rejected the call, under the Affordable Care Act, to expand Medicaid, which means that 500,000 people will be denied access to medical care. There are bills pending to tax Social Security benefits, and the legislature has done away with union dues check off (direct deductions from workers’ paychecks), weakening the state employees’ and teachers’ unions.

None of this is surprising given that the governor’s budget director is Art Pope, a member of the John Birch Society and a founding board member of the far-right billionaire Koch brothers’ Americans for Prosperity. In 2010, Pope’s organizations spent \$2.2 million on 22 state legislature races, and won 18.

North Carolina has also announced that it will go full speed ahead to implement new restrictive voting rules in light of the recent Supreme Court ruling on the Voting Rights Act.

The protests have been organized by the state NAACP along with other civil rights, labor and immigration rights groups.

Detroit protests tar sands facilities

By John Rummel

On a recent Monday, alongside the Detroit River, community and environmental activists, members of the Detroit Committee Against Tar Sands (DCATS) stopped large trucks carrying petcoke from entering a Koch Brothers owned facility. There it is stored in forty-foot piles under the open skies to be shipped on barges.

Tia Lebherz explained that pipelines bring the “really dirty” tar sands oil, harvested in Canada, across the Midwest. One of those lines ends up at Marathon Petroleum Corporation in Detroit where a product of the refinery process is petcoke.

Headed to a Koch Brothers owned facility on the river, big trucks, like the ones being blocked, weave their way through neighborhoods in Southwest Detroit carrying loads of petcoke. With each trip, the most polluted zip code in the state, 48217, gets even dirtier.

Lebherz said one of the places petcoke is shipped is DTE Energy Co’s coal powered Monroe power plant, on Lake Erie where it’s a big contributor to the carbon dioxide being released.

McKenzie Duke lives within yards of those windswept piles. She moved here a year ago and didn’t open her windows until the weather warmed in April. “All this black dust came in. It was all over my floors and my furniture.” She now lives with the windows closed.

As the coalition awaits a response to demands the protests will continue.

Inmigración: Los múltiples peligros del Acta “SAFE”

Por Emile Schepers

Al mismo tiempo que el Senado de EE.UU. comienza a encararse con las enmiendas a la Propuesta original, S 744, para la reforma migratoria que se le ofrecieron desde la cámara del Senado, las cosas están poniéndose fatal en la Cámara de Representantes.

El 6 de junio, los Representantes votaron, de acuerdo con el alineamiento político de sus respectivos partidos, 224 a 201 a favor de sabotear la tregua a las deportaciones, una acción que la administración de Obama les había ofrecido a los llamados “Soñadores” (“Dreamers”) contra deportaciones—o sea, para proteger a aquellos inmigrantes indocumentados que fueron llevados a este país como menores de edad y quienes, bajo la S 744, hubieran podido solicitar que se legalizara su condición. Se logró dicho sabotaje legislativo al votar para bloquear cualquier financiamiento para este programa DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, es decir: “Acción Diferida para los que Llegaron como Niños”) a fin de que no pudiera entrar en vigor. Se requiere, no obstante, un voto en el Senado para que esto llegue a ser una ley.

La propuesta más ultrajosa de las de carácter “sólo ejecutar la ley” que los Republicanos de la Cámara están promoviendo es la HR 2278, el Acta de Fortalecer y Fortificar (“Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement”, SAFE).

El Acta SAFE le daría autorización comprensiva a los oficiales

locales y del estado para soltar los policías encima de las comunidades de inmigrantes, como se ha intentado ya en Arizona y en otros lugares. Entre otros impactos negativos, esto echaría abajo cualquier tipo de colaboración entre las comunidades de inmigrantes y la policía local, lo cual repercutiría en la investigación de crímenes. Otros aspectos del Acta SAFE aumentarían la tasa de encarcelación de los inmigrantes y eliminaría la posibilidad de que ciertas categorías de personas aquí por razones de asilo político pudieran hacerse ciudadanos naturalizados.

El Acta SAFE fue denunciado por los miembros de la Cámara que apoyan los derechos de los inmigrantes y las libertades civiles, entre ellos, los Representantes Luís Gutiérrez, D-Ill., y John Conyers, D-Mich., y por un gran número de organizaciones laborales, comunitarias y cívicas.

La Conferencia de Lideraje para los Derechos Civiles (“Leadership Conference for Civil Rights”) emitió una declaración en la cual se detallaron los aspectos más peligrosos del Acta SAFE. En ella, destacaron que [la propuesta] “no arregla, ni es un intento de buena fe para arreglar los problemas generales que hay en el sistema migratorio de nuestro país. En muchas maneras, haría que los problemas se empeoraran. De ninguna manera apunta hacia un camino realista a la ciudadanía para los millones de inmigrantes indocumentados que viven y trabajan pacíficamente en nuestras comunidades”.

NATIONAL CONTACT

Editorial: (773) 446-9920 Business: (212) 924-2523
Email: contact@peoplesworld.org