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Post-election, secretive Republican front group exposed

By Juan Lopez

Shrouded in secrecy, hundreds of right-wing Republican state lawmakers joined powerful corporate executives and lobbyists for three days in Washington, D.C., yesterday for the yearly "States and Nation Policy Summit" of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC).

In meetings closed to the public and press, they will fashion a slate of bills for the 2013 state legislative sessions aimed ultimately to maximize corporate profits and power, at the American people's expense.

However, with a changed political post-election landscape favoring President Obama and Democrats in Congress and some state governments - on top of an energized labor and people's movement including in Republican controlled states - ALEC's agenda is likely to be more forcefully challenged.

ALEC was the main behind-the-scenes force in recent years in promoting state laws suppressing voting rights, undermining collective bargaining rights, privatizing public schools and prisons, and weakening clean air and clean water regulations, according to the Center for Media and Democracy (CMD) and Common Cause.

All of which increases the chances that these powerful people's movements will potentially work more closely with watchdog public interest groups - like the CMD and Common Cause - that have been a thorn on ALEC's side.



This becomes all the more important as efforts are being explored to coordinate ALEC's policy aims at the state level with federal congressional Republican ultra right aims.

The Huffington Post reported in September that the ultra right Heritage Foundation hosted a policy gathering for both current ALEC members and the Republican Study Committee -- a group of staunchly conservative House Republicans -- in hopes of beginning a partnership between the two organizations at the state and federal levels.

In a joint press release on the eve of the ALEC

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summit, CMD and Common Cause indicated they expect that, with public pressure many legislators will shy away from ALEC's controversial agenda

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and improper lobbying activity, this coming year.

Since the launch of ALECexposed in 2011 by CMD, along with the role of muck racking liberal media outlets and journalists and public interest groups, over 70 legislators have indicated that they have left ALEC.

To add to ALEC's problems, in the 2012 election at least 117 ALEC members lost their seats, CMD and Common Cause said.

In addition to the exodus of lawmakers, more than 40 companies have severed ties with ALEC.

In their press release, CMD and Common Cause announced they had documents that shed more light on the inner workings of ALEC.

The two watchdog groups revealed that ALEC's legislative leaders in each state have a "duty" under its public bylaws to get ALEC "model bills" introduced and enacted.

ALEC's most recent IRS Form 990, for 2011, indicates that while classified as a "charity" and enjoying the tax-exempt status that accompanies that designation.

But, the two public interest groups revealed that ALEC spent nearly \$5 million on closed-to-

the-public conferences with state legislators and "task forces" geared to advancing hundreds of corporate-drafted "model" bills.

The new documents acquired through state freedom of information requests strengthen Common Cause's case that ALEC is "a lobby masquerading as a charity," the watchdog groups said.

Common Cause is pressing a tax "whistle-blower" complaint with the IRS seeking to revoke ALEC's tax exemption.

"Buying Influence," an October 2012 report by CMD and Common Cause documents how ALEC's corporate backers have funneled an estimated \$4 million into "scholarships" since 2006 to pay for the travel and hotel expenses of state legislators attending ALEC meetings with corporate lobbyists.

By paying for the junkets through ALEC, the companies can take advantage of their tax exemption to claim the expense as a tax deduction, effectively shifting the cost to taxpayers.



Juan Lopez is a vice chair of the Communist Party.

After hurricane, public jobs needed more

PW Editorial

Governor Andrew Cuomo announced recently that New York State has received a \$27,792,296 National Emergency Grant from the federal government to hire unemployed New Yorkers (unemployed prior to or as a direct result of Hurricane Sandy) to help clean up and rebuild communities destroyed by Hurricane Sandy. The grant will make it possible to hire 5,000 youth and unemployed workers to work in the devastated areas. The workers will be paid \$15 an hour and there will also be a job-training component for young workers.

Cuomo stated, "The funding will not only provide young people and the unemployed with the opportunity to participate in cleaning up and rebuilding communities devastated by the storm, but it will provide valuable work experience and on-the-job training."

The program will be run by the New York Department of Labor and they are mandated to work with communities to identify cleanup areas, assign workers to job sites and administer the funds. The Department of Labor will also work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to organize a local program to hire local people who will replace FEMA workers.

Although the wages to the clean up workers

could be higher, and there may be concerns about union protection and benefits, the unemployed welcome this proposal and it is surely an important beginning.

"One of the ways to help New York recover is to engage New Yorkers themselves in rebuilding their communities" said, federal coordinating officer Michael Byrne. He added, "We will have a stronger recovery if those working on the recovery are personally vested in its success."

This program opens the door politically to the need for a nationwide program to rebuild our country's infrastructure through public works. Many progressive are calling for a "New New Deal." Obama's "American Jobs Act" and a number of job creation bills pending in Congress must be passed and acted on immediately. This program needs to spread to other states ravaged by Sandy.

The people voted in the last election to go "forward." That means tax the rich, transfer military spending to peoples needs, create millions of jobs for the unemployed and rebuild the country. This is something to fight for that will benefit everyone. It's time to call your member of Congress and the administration to not compromise our survival and do the right thing.

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Danny Glover speaks out for Nissan workers in Mississippi

By Matt Murray

Workers at the Nissan Plant in Mississippi are still fighting for the same rights Nissan workers in Japan have received for many years? Why? Because Nissan USA is anti-union and is pushing to keep workers down!

To often we hear stories of unions aggressively organizing. Or rumors of unions bullying people to join. The problem is that you hardly ever hear about the stories of the companies who are trying to block the unions from having an election. At the plant in Canton, this is what is going on.

This intense anti-union campaign includes making implied threats to close the plant and interrogating and harassing pro-union workers.

Now the workers in Canton, Mississippi, are getting some help from labor unions around the world, and a very friendly (and very well known) spokesman. Actor Danny Glover delivers a special message to the people at the international Labour Start conference.

As the son of postal workers he has spent millions of dollars supporting different organizations to promote social and economic justice, access to health care, and education programs in the U.S. and Africa. Danny was also arrested in 2010 in a labor protest.

“On April 16, 2010 Danny Glover and 11 others were arrested for trespassing at a Service Employees International Union protest at the Sodexo headquarters. SEIU says it was protesting what it calls Sodexo’s unfair and illegal treatment of workers” (From Wikipedia).

“He stood with protesting union members in several states. Wherever there’s a fight for workers’ rights, he has been there. Wherever workers are oppressed, Danny Glover has been there,” UAW President Bob King told the more than 1,200 delegates and activists as he presented Glover the award. Read the full article at the UAW Blog

Now Danny is calling on all the labor unions in the United States and around the world to send this message to Nissan’s Chief Operating Officer, Mr. Toshiyuki Shiga. He is asking for Nissan to “DO BETTER.” This treatment of U.S. employees would not be allowed in Japanese plants and should not be allowed here. Mr. Shiga has the



power to direct the managers of the Nissan Plant in Canton, Mississippi, to respect the workers and allow them to join the union if they choose.

Dear Mr. Shiga,

I am writing to respectfully voice my concern regarding anti-union, anti-freedom of association activities including the intimidation and harassment of workers seeking to unionize at your Nissan facility in Canton, Mississippi, USA.

I feel this type of aggressive, anti-union, hostility is a dishonor to Nissan’s well-respected reputation as a global leader, a long-standing member of the UN Global Compact, and a role model for positive labor relations. Nissan Canton local management’s actions are in direct violation of the United Nations Global Compact principles and the ILO standards which Nissan corporate management has committed to abide by.

Nissan’s employees in Canton, Mississippi, wish to exercise the same rights that Nissan workers in Japan and elsewhere enjoy. And like the many unionized Nissan workers around the globe, they proudly support their company, but they also want a voice on issues that affect them, their families, and their community.

I urge you to immediately intervene to bring local management in Canton, Mississippi, in line with the values and principles that has established Nissan as a successful and esteemed corporate citizen and allow workers in Mississippi the fundamental right to a fair union election, free of intimidation and fear.

This intense anti-union campaign includes making implied threats to close the plant and interrogating and harassing pro-union workers.

Push Senate to confirm FAA chief

By Special to PeoplesWorld.org

The Air Traffic Controllers are pushing the Senate to confirm a new permanent chief of the Federal Aviation Administration, Michael Huerta, saying he's been acting administrator long enough.

Huerta, the agency's #2, has been acting administrator for months. President Barack Obama nominated Huerta, a New Yorker and a career transportation executive, in the spring. The Senate Commerce Committee agreed on July 31. NATCA President Paul Rinaldi says the hold has gone on long enough.

The president "made a wise decision to nominate Mr. Huerta," Rinaldi said earlier this month. "He has been a steady hand at the controls of an agency that is making very positive strides forward in serving the public."

The Senate calendar on the day lawmakers returned from their Thanksgiving recess, Nov. 26, shows Huerta's nomination has not been scheduled for a vote. If there is no vote before Congress quits, Obama will have to send Huerta's name up again next year.

Huerta told the Senate Commerce Committee that if he becomes FAA's permanent administrator, he would concentrate even more on implementing the new air traffic control system, NextGen, which FAA and the unionized controllers have worked on. He also said he would involve all stakeholders, including unions, in air traffic modernization.

"NextGen is the total transformation of the way we handle air traffic here and around the world," Huerta said. "NextGen means enhanced safety, greater access to airports, a smaller impact on the environment and more predictable schedules for travelers." He added: "We need to... empower our 48,000 FAA employees to embrace innovation and to work efficiently."

Negociaciones sobre abismo fiscal en EE.UU. entran en fase decisiva

By Prensa Latina

Las negociaciones en torno a la solución del llamado abismo fiscal en Estados Unidos entrarán hoy en una fase decisiva, en medio del rechazo que ocasionó entre los republicanos la propuesta presentada por la administración del presidente Barack Obama.

La congresista demócrata por California Nancy Pelosi, líder de la minoría en la Cámara de Representantes, amenazó con votar una moción de procedimiento que obligue a dicho cuerpo legislativo a extender las actuales tasas impositivas para los estadounidenses con ingresos anuales inferiores a los 250 mil dólares.

El Senado, de mayoría demócrata, ya aprobó una legislación en ese sentido, pero los republicanos en la Cámara baja rechazan la medida y en su lugar llaman a extender todas las tasas tributarias actuales, sin alzas a los estadounidenses de mayores ingresos.

Muchos republicanos consideran que perderán influencia en las negociaciones con el Senado y la Casa Blanca en cuanto a recortes presupuestarios y al establecimiento de una reforma tributaria, si ceden a esa demanda demócrata.

La semana pasada, el secretario del Tesoro, Timothy Geithner, presentó a los legisladores la oferta inicial de la Casa Blanca, que incluye 1,6 billones de dólares en incrementos de impuestos, 50 mil millones en gastos para estimular la economía y recortes presupuestarios ascendentes a 400 mil millones.

El Ejecutivo está dispuesto a recortar el gasto federal y reducir la deuda pública de Estados Unidos, que

asciende a 16 billones de dólares, pero no aceptará ninguna propuesta de los republicanos hasta que éstos acepten primero aumentar los impuestos a los más ricos y detallen los recortes presupuestarios adicionales que reclaman.

La administración demócrata pretende subir los impuestos solo a quienes ingresen 250 mil dólares anuales o más, con el fin de reducir el déficit y financiar gastos de educación y otros proyectos sociales, pero los republicanos se niegan.

Sin embargo el presidente de la Cámara de Representantes y congresista republicano por el estado de Ohio, John Boehner, rechazó la propuesta y dijo que las negociaciones con la Casa Blanca sobre el abismo fiscal estaban en un punto muerto.

En otras noticias, las elecciones generales de 2012 en Estados Unidos concluyeron con una noticia anticipada -la reelección de Barack Obama- y una tendencia sorpresa que acarreó puntos negativos para el conservadurismo republicano y marcó el despunte de un llamado liberalismo social.

Después de unos días de recuentos y rebusesques, se confirmó que la victoria del mandatario demócrata fue contundente con 126 votos electorales más que Mitt Romney, cuatro millones de sufragios populares de ventaja.

Fueron los comicios más caros en la historia del norteamericano país, con dos mil millones de dólares gastados en todo el curso del espectáculo político, que computó un valor de 17,11 dólares por cada voto. Pese a eso, 13 millones de electores decidieron no acudir a las urnas.