

PEOPLE'S WORLD

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Obama campaign enters new stage: The Action

By Teresa Albano

In a Nov. 13 phone call to some 30,000 volunteers, newly re-elected President of the United States Barack Obama thanked them for their hard work and urged all to stay involved in grassroots action for the good of the country.

Most pressing, he said, is ending the Bush-era tax cuts for the super rich.

The Obama campaign's battleground state director Mitch Stewart asked the activists to visit a new website called The Action (theaction.org), where they could find campaign materials calling on Congress to end the tax breaks for the richest two percent in America and put the middle class first.

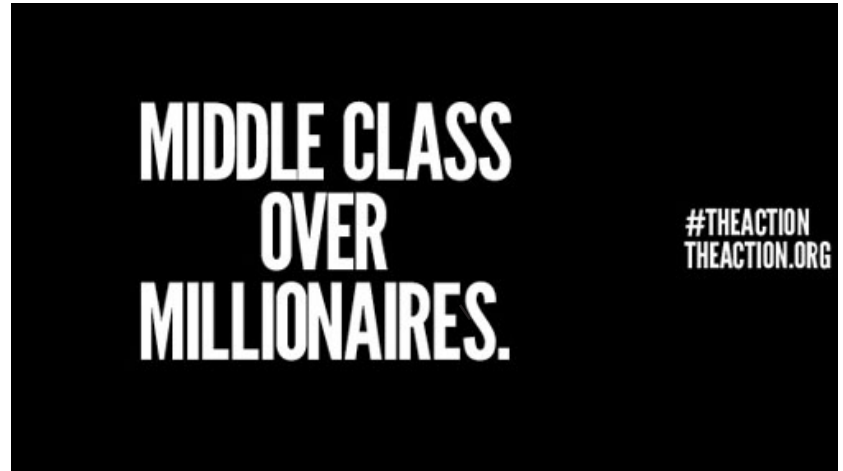
The president said he couldn't be prouder, more grateful, and impressed with the work of the campaign volunteers who registered close to two million voters in battleground states. In addition, volunteers made some 145 million phone calls and door-knocks during the election campaign. The president called it the largest grassroots effort in the history of the country.

"You didn't just help win an election," the president said. You "helped change the electorate," and got new people "involved in civic life."

He said he is proud, in awe, and inspired by the movement. Through the ups and downs, good days and bad, "you kept your eye on the ball," sacrificing time with friends and family, he said.

But "the election is not an end point," Obama said, urging volunteers to "stay active."

"You can't stop now," he said.



The president and his senior campaign staff seemed to have drawn lessons from the previous four years. At the end of the 2008 campaign, there was not an immediate pivot to utilize campaign volunteers as a grassroots political movement. That attempt came later with the founding of Organizing for America in January 2009. With OFA in place and a highly motivated volunteer army, the campaign seems to be in a better position to make the shift.

The president promised to give the volunteers

T H I S W E E K :

- Obama campaign enters new stage: The Action
- Editorial: After Hurricane Sandy, big questions remain
- Egypt brokers Gaza talks as rocket fire continues
- Bringing Obamacare to life
- Economía podría recibir aporte de construcción

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"clear direction" and to get out of Washington more.

The campaign volunteers are an example of

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how the country is stronger when people stick together, he said.

There will be "new wrinkles and new frustrations," he said, yet in order to move the country forward volunteers have to show the same grit and tenacity on issues that help the middle class as they did in the campaign.

The Action website offers an "action kit" with signs, Twitter and mobile backgrounds, and Facebook photos with slogans such as "The election is over. The action continues." and "End Bush tax cuts for the wealthy" along with #theaction and theaction.org.

On its "About Us" page, it says:

The election is over and it's time to make it count. Grassroots power is not just for elections.

Congress has until December 31st to make a critical and historic choice.

They can ask the richest two percent of Americans to pay their fair share, or they can put more money in wealthy pockets at the expense of the struggling middle class.

The Action is a grassroots movement that demands we face this crisis. There is too much

money and power in too few hands and the system is rigged to keep it that way. It's time to level the playing field. It's time to make things right.

The first step is telling Congress, loud and clear: Don't give more tax breaks to the people who need them least.

Yesterday was The Election. Today is The Action.

The Action is for the end of the Bush-era tax breaks for the richest two percent - those making more than \$250,000 per year.

The Action is for critical investments that create and sustain jobs.

It's time to join: The Action.

Yesterday, the president also met with union leaders and community groups, who said they back his plans to protect the middle class and hike taxes on the very wealthy.

They also urged him to protect Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security from Republicans' cuts.



Teresa Albano is PW co-editor.

After Sandy, big questions remain

PW Editorial

Hurricane Sandy left in its wake massive devastation and difficult questions - large and small - that have yet to be answered. From "when will we finally get electricity or heat?" or "why are so many public housing residents still trapped in their apartments?" to "where will the money come from to rebuild," "why is our power system so messed up?" and "what are we going to do about climate change?"

The super storm destroyed whole communities in New York and New Jersey. Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, West Virginia, and North Carolina were also hit hard. To date, 131 people lost their lives from the storm, on top of 69 deaths in the Caribbean and one in Canada.

Two weeks since the storm some are still without heat and electricity. The racial and class inequality that existed before the storm is at work in the aftermath of the storm.

The impact of the storm hit lower income folks, seniors, and people of color harder. It also exposed the inequality that existed before the storm. For example, public housing budgets have been starved of funding, leaving little or no money

for capital improvements and modernization.

It is outrageous that power companies in New York and New Jersey did such a poor job of responding because they were trying to save money. All the promises the companies made as to when power (and heat) would be turned on proved wrong, and predictably so. LIPA did not seek additional workers from outside the state, including from Canada, until a couple weeks after the storm when 50 percent of the outages still existed. It was a similar situation in New Jersey. Why? In a word, money. Con Ed had just finished a big struggle with its union, and the company has cut the workforce in half since the last contract.

Where is the oversight? It was obvious even before the storm that these power companies would not do what was needed to protect masses of working people from unnecessary suffering.

Much has been said about rebuilding, but not much about rebuilding in smart and sustainable ways that will address the bigger issues of inequality, poverty and climate change. Building a smart power grid that is truly public would create jobs and invest wisely in the future. The people most affected have to be involved in the rebuilding process, especially younger people and students.

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Egypt brokers Gaza talks as rocket fire continues

By Marilyn Bechtel

As rocket fire continued between Israel and Gaza's Hamas-led government Nov. 19 and Israel continued to threaten a land invasion, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon arrived in Cairo to participate in ceasefire talks initiated by Egypt's government.

In parallel talks, Egyptian mediators are meeting with leaders of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Fatah and other Palestinian organizations, and with Israeli officials, in an effort to broker a lasting resolution in the longstanding conflict. Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan are also participating in the talks.

Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal told reporters that for Gaza's government to accept a cease-fire, Israel must stop its air strikes first and lift the blockade it imposed in 2007.

The Palestinians are also demanding an end to Israeli incursions into Gaza, an end to assassinations of Palestinian leaders and a permanent freeze on attacks against fishermen off the coast.

Israel, in turn, is reportedly asking for a 15-year halt to the fighting, including an end to all rocket attacks, "terrorist attacks" launched from Gaza and smuggling of weapons into Gaza.

Meanwhile, Israel's air and sea bombardment of tiny 141-square-mile Gaza was continuing, with Gaza's health ministry saying the death toll now tops 100 - about half of them civilians - including 24 children. Among Israeli targets was a complex in Gaza City housing international media.

Among Palestinian casualties were nine members of the al-Dalou family. Israeli officials claimed the bomb that struck their home was aimed at a senior Hamas leader.

Hundreds of rockets have been fired from Gaza onto Israel, with three Israeli deaths reported so far.

The current weeklong upsurge in rocket fire began after an Israeli airstrike assassinated Hamas military leader Ahmad al-Jaabari on Nov. 14. Jaabari had been the lead negotiator in the release of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, and reportedly had been involved in arranging a short-lived truce in the days immediately before his death.



Besides the air and sea assaults, Israel has massed 75,000 troops on the Gaza border, amid speculation about an imminent invasion.

A poll published this week found most Israelis supporting the air strikes but only 30 percent supporting a ground offensive.

Administration officials said President Barack Obama had spoken by phone with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Egyptian President Morsi, expressing condolences for the loss of Israeli and Palestinian lives, and emphasizing the need to de-escalate the conflict. The administration has also said Palestinian rocket fire into Israel must end, and Israel has the right to defend itself.

In a statement issued this week, the American Friends Service Committee said the current situation bears "a striking resemblance" to past Israeli military offensives including the 2008 Operation Cast Lead, in which over 1,400 Palestinians were killed and homes and infrastructure devastated.

The Communist Party USA called on the Israeli government to stop escalating the conflict and pull back from sending in ground troops. The CPUSA also urged the U.S. to press Israel to stop further attacks in Gaza and return to serious negotiations toward a two-state solution meeting the aspirations of the Palestinian people.

And J Street, which calls itself "the political home for pro-Israel, pro-peace Americans," called on President Obama "to step forward ... with a bold new effort to resolve this conflict."

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Bringing Obamacare to life

By Marilyn Bechtel

Health care reform is on track now that President Obama has been reelected. But the struggle to fully implement the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is heating up on two fronts: expanding Medicaid coverage to people not eligible now, and setting up state health insurance exchanges to provide information and help to individuals and small businesses buying health coverage.

Some states are already well along in the process, while others waited to see how the election would come out. Still others are resisting setting up exchanges and expanding Medicaid.

Last summer's Supreme Court decision upholding Obamacare left it up to the states, whether to expand Medicaid coverage to people with incomes up to 133 percent of the poverty level, or about \$14,000 a year for individuals and \$29,000 for a family of four. Millions of uninsured people nationwide could be covered under the Medicaid expansion.

Governors in several states, including Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Texas, have said they won't expand Medicaid, even though the federal government will pay all the costs for newly eligible people for the first three years, and 90 percent permanently.

Some are getting push-back from reform supporters in their states.

In Florida, Republican Gov. Rick Scott and legislative leaders are thinking twice about the issue, the Miami Herald reported. Scott, who had earlier said expanding Medicaid was too expensive, acknowledged in a Nov. 9 statement, "Just saying 'no' is not an answer." Meanwhile, all of the state's hospitals and many physicians want to see Medicaid expanded.

Many states are also still deciding whether to set up insurance exchanges.

Economía de EE.UU podría recibir aporte de construcción de casas

By Prensa Latina

El mercado inmobiliario estadounidense permanece hoy en la mira de los expertos, pues algunos prevén que este año, por primera vez desde 2005, la construcción de casas aportará al Producto Interno Bruto.

El Departamento de Comercio informó que los inicios de construcción de viviendas subieron en octubre pasado 3,6 por ciento, el ritmo más veloz en cuatro años.

La edificación residencial aumentó 41,9 por ciento en comparación con igual período de 2011.

Empero, los permisos para inicios de construcciones disminuyeron 2,7 puntos en el décimo mes del año, con descensos principalmente en el segmento multifamiliar.

La entidad remarcó que las cifras recientes, marcadas sobre todo por el alza de las ventas, reciben el impulso de la demanda favorecida por tasas hipotecarias históricamente bajas.

Sin embargo, analistas opinaron que el mercado sigue golpeado por el elevado nivel de desempleo y los requisitos más estrictos de los bancos para el otorgamiento de los préstamos.

La explosión de la burbuja inmobiliaria que envió a esa economía a su peor recesión en más de medio siglo, es uno de los principales sinsabores que les quedan a los estadounidenses.

Por ello, los expertos subrayan el peso que pudiera tener el incremento de dicha actividad en la evolución de la economía.

El anuncio en septiembre de la Reserva Federal de Estados Unidos de que adquirirá cada mes unos 40 mil millones de dólares en títulos hipotecarios hasta impulsar la recuperación, podría disminuir más las tasas

de interés y estimular la demanda de domicilios, añadieron.

Asimismo consideran que la ayuda al mercado es un tema pendiente para el gobierno, por lo que estiman necesario un programa de rescate a fin de respaldar a los propietarios que continúan atrasados en los pagos de sus hipotecas a causa de la explosión de la burbuja.

En otras noticias, cerca de un centenar de congresistas republicanos enviaron hoy una carta al presidente estadounidense, Barack Obama, pidiéndole se abstenga de nominar como futura secretaria de Estado a la actual embajadora en Naciones Unidas, Susan Rice.

Los legisladores acusan a Rice de realizar declaraciones imprecisas, ya sea a propósito o por incompetencia, que desinformaron al público estadounidense acerca del ataque contra el consulado norteamericano en Benghasi en septiembre pasado, que provocó la muerte del embajador en Trípoli, Christopher Stevens, y otros tres funcionarios.

Los firmantes del documento critican el hecho de que Rice calificó de espontáneas las protestas en Benghasi, que achacó en su momento a la exhibición de fragmentos de un filme anti-islámico en Estados Unidos, pero que culminaron con la acción de fuerza contra el consulado. Esta versión fue negada posteriormente.

En la carta, 97 miembros republicanos de la Cámara de Representantes, que no tienen facultades de confirmación sobre las nominaciones presidenciales, dijeron que están profundamente atribulados por la posibilidad de que Rice sea designada para relevar a la actual jefa de la diplomacia estadounidense, Hillary Clinton.