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## Unions hail Obama infrastructure push

By PAI



**L**aborers Union President Terry O'Sullivan and AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department President Ed Wytkind hailed President Obama's push to get Congress to enact a \$302 billion four-year mass-transit-highway construction bill. And AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka? "Bring it on!"

Obama launched his latest push for the legislation in a Feb. 26 speech in the Twin Cities. He lauded their new light rail line - and said the U.S. needs to upgrade its infrastructure. Under tea party sway, the House's ruling Republicans generally resist.

"The president wants to push for public and private infrastructure investment, we say bring it on. Union workers stand ready to meet the needs of the largest project you can think up," Trumka declared. "We didn't become the world's largest economy just by good luck. We made massive, smart investments in public goods at the right times. And we'll do it again. Our government and business leaders can invest smarter, and our workers can build it better."

Obama told his audience that he's focusing on infrastructure because time and money are running out. "If Congress doesn't finish a transportation bill by the end of the summer, we could see construction projects stop in their tracks, ma-

chines sitting idle, workers off the job," he warned.

His budget will rebuild transportation infrastructure responsibly "over four years, which gives cities and states and private investors the certainty they need to plan major projects. Projects like repairing essential highways and bridges (and) building new transit systems in fast-growing cities and communities, so folks who live there can get to work and school every day and spend less time sitting in traffic.

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"All told, my transportation budget will support millions of jobs nationwide. And we'll pay for these investments in part by simplifying the tax code. We're going to close wasteful tax loopholes, lower tax rates for businesses that create jobs here at home, stop rewarding companies for sending

**Obama is proposing a \$302 billion four-year mass-transit-highway construction bill.**

jobs to other countries, and use the money we save in this transition to create good jobs with good wages rebuilding America. It makes sense,” Obama declared.

Wytkind and O’Sullivan liked what they heard. O’Sullivan reiterated, however, that transportation projects should be paid for by a phased-in hike of the federal gas tax, which has stayed stagnant since 1993.

“For too long, the duct-tape approach by Congress has destabilized the construction industry, stalled projects, cost jobs and slowed our economy,” he said.

“More discussion and debate is welcome, but ultimately there must be action as the facts remain clear: The average bridge in our country is 45 years old, dangerously close to the average 50-year lifespan. Typically, 25 bridges a year collapse in the U.S. Every dollar we invest now could save \$14 later due to higher costs caused by further deterioration. Delaying investment costs motorists more than \$324 a year each on wasted fuel and repairs.

“Adjusting the gas tax remains the most re-

liable, common-sense means of bridging the gap between needs and investment. The gas tax has been stagnant for two decades while needs and construction materials costs have increased. A phased-in increase will be enough to fuel our nation’s Highway Trust Fund before it runs out of gas and allow our nation the time it needs to develop alternative, longer-term solutions, such as vehicle miles travelled fee, innovative financing tools and other solutions,” he said.

“We’re pleased the president has declared it a priority to fix the surface transportation funding crisis that is threatening our economy and American competitiveness,” Wytkind added. Obama’s unveiling of the \$302 billion proposal “adds a sense of urgency to the debate as Congress and the president deal with the imminent insolvency of the Highway Trust Fund.”

The trust fund, which gas tax revenues fuels, is projected to run out of money by August, right in the middle of construction season. It has around \$9 billion left.



**Press Associates Inc. (PAI) is a union news service.**

## **No to U.S. intervention in Ukraine!**

By PW Editorial Board

**S**ince last fall, there have been demonstrations in Kiev and other cities against the Ukrainian government’s decision to back away from a trade deal with the European Union and instead explore new trade and aid relationships with Russia. Other grievances have also been raised. Early on, some right wing extremist elements began to play an increasingly active role in the protests. These have included the “Svoboda” (“Freedom”) Party and other nationalists and fascists. They are not merely anti-communist and anti-Russian, but also anti-Semitic and anti-Polish. Some of them are the political descendants of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army of Stepan Bandera, an extreme right wing nationalist who, during and immediately after the Second World War, fought against the Red Army on the side of Germany, and carried out pogroms against Jews, Poles and others.

These fascist elements took over the town of Lviv, in Western Ukraine, and equipped them-

selves with weapons from the local armory.

Attacks against Jews have led a prominent Rabbi to recommend that Jews now leave Kiev. Attacks on the Communist Party of the Ukraine and its leadership have been escalating, including the seizing of the property of the party and its leaders.

There is strong opposition to these developments in the Eastern and Southern Ukraine, including the major cities of Kharkov and Odessa, and in the Crimean Peninsula. The Crimea contains, by agreement between Ukraine and Russia, the major Russian naval base at Sevastopol. So there is a danger that a civil war could break out in the Ukraine and draw in Russia and perhaps others. Unfortunately, statements of Victoria Nuland, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, and other U.S. officials and politicians strongly indicate an agenda on the part of the Obama administration of “regime change.” That would be a disaster. We say no to U.S. intervention!

**We say no to U.S. intervention!**

# Texas judge overthrows gay marriage ban

By Kelly Sinclair

**P**residing U.S. District Judge Orlando Garcia ruled Wednesday that the ban on marriage equality in the state of Texas is unconstitutional.

In his ruling, the San Antonio judge, a Clinton appointee, wrote that the same-sex marriage ban “violates plaintiffs’ equal protection and due process rights under the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.”

Last June, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 5-4 on *U.S. v. Windsor*, which required the federal government-but not states-to recognize same-sex marriages. The logical outflow of the decision continues to trickle through various state courts, with the rivulet showing signs of becoming a torrent.

Already, federal court decisions have struck down all or part of state bans on same-sex marriage in Kentucky, Oklahoma and Virginia. Over twenty states face similar cases.

Wrote Judge Garcia in his order, “By denying plaintiffs Holmes and Phariss the fundamental right to marry, Texas denies their relationship the same status and dignity afforded to citizens who are permitted to marry. It also denies them the legal, social, and financial benefits of marriage that opposite-sex couples enjoy...The laws demean their dignity for no legitimate reason.”

Garcia stayed the effect of the order, as a federal court in Austin has pending cases challenging the same-sex marriage ban. This means that, for the time being, same-sex couples will not be able to get married in Texas.

Attorney General Greg Abbott, a Republican



candidate for governor, is united with his fellow GOP primary foes in opposing Garcia’s decision. Abbott said that the state would appeal.

State Sen. Wendy Davis, Abbott’s probable Democratic opponent in November, responded on a more positive note. “I believe that all Texans who love one another and are committed to spending their lives together should be allowed to marry,” she said.

State Democratic Chairman Gilberto Hinojosa said in his release that “today, all Texans can celebrate that we are one step closer to justice and equality for all.”

Garcia’s decision will likely be appealed to a higher court. The case could make its way to the U.S. Supreme Court, whose decision would impact the nation.

In 2005, 76 percent of Texas voters approved an amendment that limited marriage and civil unions in Texas to one man and one woman.

The mood of the poll-taking public today? A December 2013 poll from The Public Religion Research Institute showed that 48 percent of Texans favored allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry legally while 49 percent opposed. This almost-even split marks a dramatic change since 2005. However, Texas still lags behind the national rate of 53 percent in favor to 41 percent opposed.

**The same-sex marriage ban violates plaintiffs equal protection and due process rights under the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution.**

## Nurses strike to put “Patients before profits”

By Camillo Santo

**H**undreds of nurses, hospital workers and supporters hit the picket line in the bitter cold here, Feb. 11. That evening, they held a candlelight vigil. The nurses, members of the Service Employees union, SEIU, went on strike against UPMC (University of Pittsburgh Medical Center) Altoona, formerly the Altoona General Hospital. The SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania nurses say that UPMC rejected their proposals to improve staffing ratios, which is shown to improve patient outcomes, decrease the length of hospital stays, and increase patient satisfaction scores, among other issues.

The strike was to be for only one day, as the nurses were concerned about the welfare of the patients. However, the nurses and others walked the picket line again the next day. At one point, they marched to the hospital entrance but were prevented from entering. It was announced that day that a protest rally would be held at the UPMC headquarters in Pittsburgh and this was carried out. One nurse, who asked to remain nameless, said that the bosses might be trying to bust the union and that the sentiment of the strikers could be summed up in the slogan: Patients Before Profits.

After the one-day strike, many of the nurses were locked out for several days because of UPMC's contract with a scab agency, a union official said.

The nurses are now back at work, but without a contract.

## Allende estará en asunción de nuevo gobierno chileno

Prensa Latina

**L**a próxima presidenta del Senado chileno, Isabel Allende, afirmó hoy que el mandatario Salvador Allende, quien murió durante un golpe de Estado en 1973, estará presente en el cambio de gobierno el 11 de marzo.

“Mucha gente va a estar presente. El presidente Allende y mucha gente que murió para que nosotros regresáramos a la democracia”, expresó la legisladora al referirse a su padre en diálogo con ADN Radio.

Destacó que durante la ceremonia de investidura será la encargada de entregar la banda presidencial a la mandataria electa, Michelle Bachelet.

La senadora precisó que será un momento cargado de simbolismos, porque los dos cargos más importantes de Chile estarán ocupados por mujeres. Siento mucha emoción, creo que es una foto que va a dar la vuelta al mundo, manifestó.

Allende será la primera fémina que encabezará el Senado de esta nación sudamericana, que también dirigió su progenitor de 1966 a 1969.

Seremos muy rigurosos en la discusión de proyectos, entre ellos, los relativos a energía y temas medioambientales, adelantó la legisladora.

Estoy muy orgullosa de ejercer el mismo cargo que (en su momento) Salvador Allende. Espero ser una articuladora de las distintas posiciones que se expresen y, al igual que mi padre, ser completamente respetuosa de las mayorías y minorías, manifestó la pasada semana.

La Senadora Allende declaró que

“Ser la primera mujer en presidir el Senado de Chile es un honor y espero que esto sea una expresión más de cómo tenemos que seguir avanzando en la participación política de las mujeres”.

Asimismo, la parlamentaria recordó que su padre, Salvador Allende, fue Presidente del Senado entre 1966 y 1969. “Como socialista estoy muy orgullosa de ejercer el mismo cargo que el Presidente Allende. Espero ser una articuladora de las distintas posiciones que se expresen en el Senado, y al igual que mi padre, ser completamente respetuosa de las mayorías y minorías que representan nuestra democracia”.

La Senadora de Atacama destacó que se inicia una nueva etapa para Chile: “Como presidenta del Senado, guiaré mi gestión para que esta Corporación esté a la altura de los desafíos que como país enfrentamos, en la reforma a la educación que todos los chilenos y chilenas apoyan; la reforma Constitucional que requerimos para profundizar la democracia; y por cierto, trabajaré por obtener los recursos que los cambios a la enseñanza requiere, respaldando la reforma tributaria que la Presidenta Bachelet le propuso al país en su campaña”.

Asimismo finalizó diciendo que: “Entregarle la banda presidencial a nuestra querida Presidenta electa, Michelle Bachelet es una alta distinción. Es simbólico que seamos dos mujeres quienes encabeceamos esta ceremonia cívica y republicana en nuestro país”.

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