

# PEOPLE'S WORLD

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## Unionists lobby to restore, strengthen Voting Rights Act

By Mark Gruenberg

**U**rged on by union leaders, civil rights leaders and sympathetic lawmakers, more than 1,000 people - including hundreds of unionists - descended on Congress to demand lawmakers restore and strengthen the Voting Rights Act.

The lobbying followed a mass rally on Capitol Hill, organized by the Democracy Initiative, a 51-group coalition created by Larry Cohen when he led the Communications Workers. Speakers, including Cohen declared that without the right to vote, other rights - including workers' rights - are meaningless.

The rally was the culmination of a months-long march of unionists, civil rights activists, clergy - including 200 rabbis carrying a Torah on the Jewish holidays-environmentalists and others from Selma, Ala., to D.C., demanding restoration and improvement of the law.

The NAACP provided a huge contingent of marchers, with many coming all the way from Selma. Environmentalists, other civil rights groups, and lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender groups were among the others at the rally.

The legislation, introduced by top Democrats on committees that handle civil rights bills and Congressional Black Caucus members, just picked up its first GOP backer, Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-



Alaska, one speaker said. It also would outlaw so-called "voter ID" laws that curb or ban voting by African-Americans, women, Latinos, workers, students, the elderly and others.

And it would extend Justice Department oversight and pre-clearance of jurisdictions with history of discrimination, while extending the Voting Rights Act to cover Native Americans, too.

But the measure faces hostility from Congress' ruling Republicans, especially from House

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Judiciary Committee Chairman Robert Goodlatte, R-Va. "There is a crime in those buildings," said the Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, creator and leader of North Carolina's Moral Monday marches and movement, as he gestured to the U.S. Capitol and solons' office buildings.

**If you want our vote, you need to commit to the right to vote.**

“Power concedes nothing without a struggle,” warned Rep. Terri Sewell, D-Ala., a co-sponsor. Her congressional district includes Selma, Montgomery and Birmingham.

“Those buildings are the scene of that crime,” Barber continued. “It is a crime against voting rights. An attack on voting rights is an attack on education, labor, health care, and raising the minimum wage to a living wage.”

That’s “because when you allow extremists, Republican or Democrat, to steal elections, it’s a crime against democracy,” Barber declared.

“The only major nation trying to restrict the right to vote is the United States of America,” added supportive Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., referring to the restrictive so-called “Voter ID” laws the Supreme Court approved several years ago and that many states have since passed. Those states, including Indiana, Texas, Alabama and North Carolina, are virtually all GOP-run.

Cohen’s successor, current Communications Workers President Chris Shelton said, “the other side has all the weapons” in “a class war” against minorities, women and workers.

“The Supreme Court has said corporations are people, and taken away our weapon, the right to vote. Are you ready to take that weapon back?” he asked the crowd. “Yes!” was the roared reply.

“No matter what anybody’s issues are, we will never be able to fix them unless every goddamn American has the right to vote!” Shelton exclaimed.

“Without voting rights, we have no union rights and we have no marriage rights,” said AFT President Randi Weingarten.

“We’re not asking for a handout. We’re asking for a seat at the table,” AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Tefere Gebre summarized.

And NAACP President Cornell Brooks brought the 2016 run for the White House into the picture. Addressing all the presidential contenders of both political parties, he said: “It’s a simple moral question. If you are seeking to occupy the White House...If you are asking for our vote, why can’t you commit to the right to vote?”



**Gruenberg is the editor of Press Associates Inc.**

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## **Jeb’s tax plan would still let hedge fund managers pig out**

**By Roberta Wood**

**T**he American people are fed up with Wall Street and the right wing can’t ignore it. The 99 percent are furious about paying higher tax rates than the billionaires.

At the Republican debate, Jeb Bush tried to ride that wave of anger with a startling proposal to raise taxes for hedge fund managers.

Bush’s tax proposal, according to New York Times finance columnist Andrew Ross Sorkin, would raise the tax rates that the hedge fund managers pay on the money they “earn.” Right now that rate is only 15 percent, compared to the 25 percent the average American pays and the 39 percent that highest incomes are supposed to be taxed at.

Eliminating this hedge fund privilege in the tax code would raise \$17 billion that could go a long way to funding education, child care or heck, just reducing taxes on the rest of us.

So why aren’t the hedge hogs squealing about the \$17 billion dip into their trough?

The answer is that they’ve read the whole plan, and so should we. While it’s the headliner, actually the tax increase on hedge hogs is only a relatively small aspect of Bush’s plan. Don’t expect to hear too much about the rest. It’s like one of those giant “loss leader” sales to lure you into the store. You feel like you got over with 10 cent bananas, but by the time you paid an extra 50 cents on 20 other items, you come out behind.

In the case of Bush’s loss leader, the rest of his plan drops corporate tax rates from 35 to 20 percent and reduces the individual rate on billionaires to 28 from about 39 percent. The hedge fund guys will come out just fine.

In fact, Jeb himself would pay nearly a million dollars a year less in taxes, according to an estimate by Catherine Rampell of the Washington Post.

**Eliminating the hedge fund privilege in the tax code would raise \$17 million dollars for vital public services.**

# A verdict means “open season” on Indians

By Albert Bender

**I**t was an infamous decision. Magistrate Judge Eric Strawn ruled that Trace O’Connell, was not guilty of disorderly conduct when he poured beer, threw objects, yelled racist statements and physically threatened young Lakota children at a hockey game in Rapid City, S.D. in January. O’Connell was the sole person charged in the racist attack although 15 or more men were involved.

The judge ruled that dousing the children with beer and yelling hateful statements was neither racist nor offensive, but “celebratory.” This is beyond incredible. It is abysmal, abominable and hideous racism (both the behavior and the “legal” decision).

Following that line of so-called reasoning, it can be assumed that if Native Americans threw beer on a group of whites and made threatening statements this would be dismissed as just “celebratory.” No court in the land would so rule. We all know that just the opposite would happen: Native defendants would be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law in our racist court system.

The judge’s decision is tantamount to declaring an “open season” on Indians, children in particular, that will reverberate throughout the country, particularly in other areas of the Western states. The racist killings of Indian people by the police and atrocities against Native children will continue.



It brings to mind the days of the civil rights movement in the South when racist white judges and juries routinely found “not guilty” white hooligans who abused and killed civil rights workers and African Americans simply fighting for the right to vote and for desegregation.

Something has to be done instead of simply waiting for another atrocity to be committed. The attack on the children and this loathsome legal decision should be a “turning point.”

During the civil rights movement a “turning point” was reached when the fire hoses were unleashed on African American elementary school children demonstrating on the streets of Birmingham, Alabama.

The racism in law enforcement in Indian Country has been a crisis for longer than recent memory, but it has escalated when our children are not seen as fit to be protected by the legal system. (We have already seen the continued kidnapping of Indian children by South Dakota in violation of the Indian Child Welfare Act).

We need to have a national meeting of Native people and supporters to address this crisis post haste. There has to be national coordination and strategy to confront and bring to justice these racist perpetrators and to deal with a rogue justice system.

**The judge ruled that it is ok to yell at and pour beer on Indian children.**

## Report: Latinos in unions are better off

By Victor Baten

**T**he Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) published a groundbreaking report that confirms that Latino workers who are members of labor unions are much better off than their non-union peers.

The report titled “Latino Workers and Unions: A Strategic Partnership for America’s Progress,” available in English and Spanish, reveals the latest data that shows how Latinos in unions earn higher wages, and have better benefits.

“Latino and immigrant workers are making significant contributions to our country, but are facing unprecedented challenges at the workplace and in their communities. Over 6.8 million Latino workers are earning poverty level wages and need the economic security the labor movement has ensured for America’s middle class,” said Hector Sanchez, LCLAA’s executive director.

“This report highlights the important partnership that can be achieved through organizing to improve the quality of life for Latinos and strengthen America’s labor movement.”

One of the most striking findings is that on average, Latinos who belong to a union earn \$11,544 more than non-unionized Latinos.

The report makes a compelling case for collective action as a way to empower Latino workers and to give better opportunities for future generations.

This bilingual report contains a section titled “Know your rights at the workplace” that offers useful labor rights advice to workers, including information on joining a labor union and a worker center.

## La becas de la UFW para hijos de campesinos

UFW

**S**e han entregado las becas de \$500 a \$1,000 a los hijos de los campesinos que trabajan bajo contrato con la Unión de Campesinos (UFW por sus siglas). Los eventos se han llevado a cabo en las oficinas de la UFW en Madera, Salinas, Oxnard, y la oficina de la UFW en Santa Rosa hará una ceremonia a finales de este mes. El programa de becas fue establecido por miembros de la unión y los miembros han contribuido los fondos que desde el 2010 hasta ahora han ayudado a muchos estudiantes a continuar con sus estudios. Los estudiantes, todos de familias de trabajadores de campesinos, representan a miles de campesinos que trabajan arduamente por todo California y el noroeste Pacífico.

Los ganadores de becas han demostrado un compromiso en completar su educación a pesar de las dificultades financieras. Los estudiantes pueden aplicar los fondos para los gastos relacionados con la educación, incluyendo libros, gastos de laboratorio, uniformes y otros cargos relacionados con sus estudios. Los estudiantes fueron seleccionados para recibir las becas en función de su rendimiento académico sobresaliente, servicio a la comunidad y trabajo voluntario ejemplar.

Stephanie Chávez Solorio, una estudiante de la escuela Fresno State y ganadora de una beca nos dice, “Sin la ayuda de becas como el programa de becas Si Se Puede, la universidad sería una tarea difícil de intentar, y aun así superar”.

María Molinero, otra ganadora agrego, “Yo nací en Michoacán, México y soy la mayor de una familia de dos hijos. Actualmente estoy en mi primer año en el colegio Hartnell Community College y la primera persona en graduarse de la preparatoria (High School). Estoy motivada para seguir una educación superior con el fin de tener éxito en la vida y regresar todo lo que me ha dado mi comunidad”.

Gabriel Mendoza, otro ganador compartió, “Cuando empecé a asistir a la escuela, yo sólo hablaba en mixteco. Fue una lucha, pero después de unos años aprendí el español e inglés. Yo trabajo arduamente en la escuela porque sé que mis padres y todos los campesinos que me están dando esta beca, trabajan arduamente todos los días. Me siento muy honrado y agradecido por recibir la beca Si Se Puede”.

“Siempre ha sido una prioridad para la Unión de Campesinos que los campesinos y sus hijos continúen sus estudios superiores”, dijo el presidente de la UFW, Arturo S. Rodríguez. “A medida que los ganadores continúen con su educación, esperamos sinceramente verlos convertirse en profesionales y que regresen a ayudarnos a continuar con nuestra lucha por los derechos de los campesinos. Los campesinos que ven a sus hijos recibir estas becas obtienen una sensación de que su arduo trabajo y sacrificio vale la pena.

### NATIONAL CONTACT

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