

PEOPLE'S WORLD

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March 25, 2011

Arizona Senate rejects anti-immigrant bills

By Pepe Lozano

In a move immigrant rights supporters hail as a victory, the Arizona Senate, which has a Republican majority, defeated five anti-immigrant bills March 17. Arizona, a border state, has been at the forefront of recently enacting draconian laws widely seen as repressive and racist towards Mexican and Latin American immigrants (documented and undocumented) and all people of Latino descent.

Last year, Arizona Republican Gov. Jan Brewer signed SB 1070 into law, which grants local law enforcement the authority to detain people they suspect to be living in the country illegally.

A federal judge, acting on a lawsuit filed by the Obama administration, has stayed central provisions of that law.

Arizona's senate Republicans were split on the recent bills. Yet, enough of them joined every Democrat in the state senate to oppose the measures, which they say went too far.

State lawmakers rejected the package of new bills including two that would have challenged citizenship for U.S.-born children of undocumented parents. Citizenship is guaranteed in the Constitution for all people born in the United States.

Arizona is one of more than a dozen states where lawmakers plan to push through legislation targeting citizenship and the Constitution. In



most cases those efforts have been stalled.

Other defeated measures would have:

- required hospitals to determine the legal status of their patients;
- restricted registration of vehicles to only those who can prove they are citizens and make it a crime for undocumented immigrants to drive in Arizona;
- barred admission into state universities and community colleges to those who cannot prove they are citizens or legal residents; mandated cit-

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ies to evict public housing residents if even one occupant of a unit is an undocumented immigrant.

Senators also killed legislation that would have required parents to provide proof of citizenship or other legal documents for any child being

Lawmakers plan to push through legislation targeting citizenship and the Constitution.

enrolled in a public school.

Also shot down was a related bill that would have forced schools to produce a count of how many undocumented children are in Arizona schools.

During the floor debate, Democratic Senate Minority Leader David Schapira asked, "What is the cost to our future as a state and a country when we pass legislation that says we will no longer educate?"

Sen. Steve Gallardo exposed the anti-youth nature of the bills. "We are no longer going after human smugglers. We are no longer going after employers. We are now going after the youth and their future. What state makes it illegal to go to college?"

The vote came after a plea earlier this week by 60 CEOs urging Arizona lawmakers to put a halt to enacting any more controversial immigration laws. The business community said in a letter to lawmakers that Arizona has suffered from the boycotts called in the wake of last year's approval of SB 1070.

Plus, passing new anti-immigrant bills would continue to throw new barriers in the path of economic development, the business leaders said.

It could have been that business pressure which influenced state Republicans. GOP Sen. Steve Yarbrough insisted state leaders should focus on its budget and not a divisive issue that puts Arizona in a bad light.

The votes are a major victory for immigrant rights and a setback for Senate President Russell Pearce, a Republican, who wrote and backed each of the five bills. Pearce was also the main sponsor and writer of Arizona's SB 1070. Until now, most GOP lawmakers had been willing to go along with anything he wanted.

Republican Sen. John McComish said Pearce's immigration bills were a distraction. "They could be a detriment to the growth of our economy, and they are something people don't want us to be focused on," he told the Arizona Republic.



Pepe Lozano writes for the People's World.

War is not the answer for Libya

By PW Editorial Board

First Libya's Col. Gaddafi unleashed a military onslaught against the democratic struggle of his own people, firing tank and artillery shells into demonstrations in the streets of Libya's cities. Now, after pressing for United Nations authorization, the U.S., Britain and France have begun an open-ended air war in Libya, using cruise missiles, bombers and fighter jets, with the stated aim of protecting Libyan civilians. It is a very disturbing picture.

Global oil politics are involved here.

The sight of Britain and France, former colonial powers in Africa, now bombing this North African country in the name of democracy should raise warning signs for all of us. President Obama has repeatedly stated his intention to turn away from the military-might posture of previous U.S. administrations. Yet, in the name of humanitarian and democratic concerns, he has joined the old colonial powers in a dangerous military venture, setting a bad precedent for further U.S. military

interventions.

What is the end game? What efforts are being made to arrange a real ceasefire, based on protection of Libya's democratic forces? A face-saving negotiated exit for Gaddafi? Both China and Russia abstained from the UN vote. Are efforts being made to involve these major world powers, and others, in achieving a peaceful end to this crisis, one that also advances the interests of the Libyan people?

President Obama was right in resisting war-hawks' calls for early military intervention in Libya. He needs to stand up against them once again, by moving toward a quick cease-fire. Surely the United States can work with other world leaders to defend and protect the Libyan people with the vast economic and diplomatic powers it possesses. This, along with getting out of Iraq and Afghanistan, is the way to move toward establishing U.S. leadership as a beacon for democracy, peace and social justice.

Global oil politics are involved here.

Public service union leader urges Boehner to cool violent rhetoric

By John Wojcik

Calling recent statements by House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, AFSCME president Gerald McEntee has called upon the speaker to “stop using violent metaphors and demonizing public employees.”

He was referring to a recent television interview on the Christian Broadcasting Network during which Boehner claimed that collective bargaining is a “machine gun that public employees have put right at the head of public officials.”

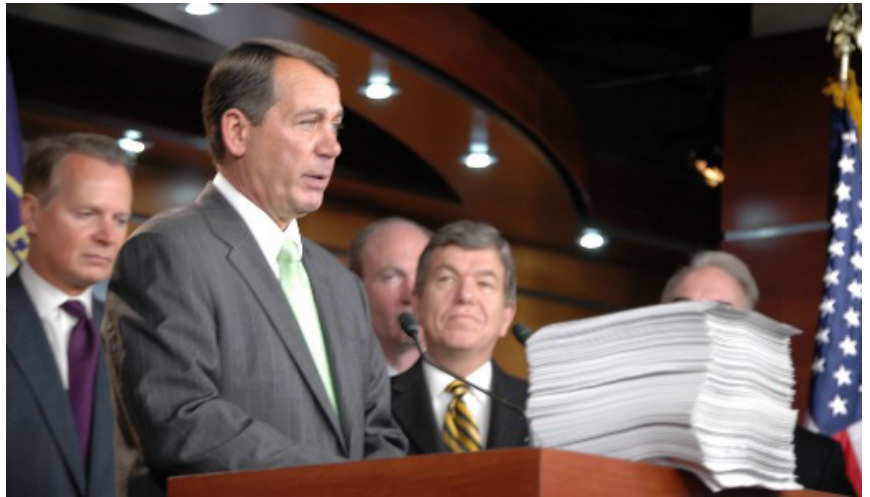
“Collective bargaining isn’t a weapon,” said McEntee. “It’s a process that gives workers a voice in finding solutions to problems that exist. We should pull together as a country, but that kind of language will only tear us apart.”

“How much better would we all be,” McEntee asked, “if Boehner stayed focused on job creation?”

“The Speaker says that public employees’ pay and benefits are out of line with other workers. That’s not right,” said McEntee. “The average AFSCME retiree pension is \$19,000. Spreading false information is just another way of demonizing the men and women who staff 911 centers, teachers, people who care for the infirm and others.”

McEntee issued a statement yesterday saying his union is calling upon all workers to join in an April 4 day of solidarity with workers in dozens of states where “right wing corporate politicians are trying to take away the rights Dr. King gave his life for.”

It was on April 4 in 1968 that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated while supporting the right of sanitation workers to unionize under the auspices of AFSCME in Memphis, Tenn.



Also yesterday, as they have increasingly over the past month, allies of the labor movement continued to speak out against anti-labor Republicans.

In Iowa, former Speaker Pat Murphy, D-Dubuque, blasted Iowa’s GOP House leadership for resorting to shut downs of the Capitol switchboard when hundreds of calls came in from citizens angry about budget cuts.

Noted economist Dean Baker also came to the defense of public workers when he released a report yesterday, showing what unions consider the best explanation yet of the so-called pension crisis cited by conservatives as the reason for their support for attacks on unions.

In it, Baker explains that the cause of the pension problems states are having is not benefit payments or benefit increases but the significant decline in the stock market in 2008 and 2009. Baker documents how pension funding, as a percentage of the total U.S. economy, is extremely small and the challenge of funding pensions is more than manageable in the long term.

How much better would we all be if Boehner stayed focused on job creation?

Protesters crash “corporate criminal” breakfast

By Tony Pecinovsky

As citizens of the city of St. Louis, we think these corporate criminals should go to jail,” said Cathy de la Aguilera, an organizer for Missourians Organizing for Reform and Empowerment, as dozens of community activists stormed into St. Louis University’s School of Business here March 18.

The activists were protesting the St. Louis Business Journal’s annual ‘Most Influential St. Louisians’ breakfast where St. Louis’ most influential corporate leaders and politicians, including Pat Mercurio, the Missouri market president for Bank of America and Governor Jay Nixon, among many others came to mingle.

“If we are talking about the most influential people in St. Louis,” de la Aguilera continued, “then we are talking about a bad influence.”

She added, “When the banks made poor decisions our tax dollars bailed them out, the least they can do is help families in need.”

Bank of America received \$45 billion in TARP bailout loans in 2009 - loans that are still being paid back to tax payers. However, its CEO is expected to get a \$9 million all-stock bonus this year. Other executives will also receive millions of dollars in stock bonuses.

Bank of America agreed to pay \$410 million to settle on accusations of manipulating transactions to maximize overdraft fees.

Summing up the spirit of the action de la Aguilera said, “We need to hold these corporate criminals accountable for their crimes. They are accountable to the people. And we are going to disrupt their ‘business as usual’ until we get justice.”

¿Plantes nucleares en el futuro de Chile?

Por Federico Quilodran

El gobierno chileno está considerando la posibilidad de instalar reactores nucleares en un momento de re-evaluación de todo el mundo después de los problemas en Japón tras el terremoto.

Si bien no hay planes concretos por ahora, abundan las alusiones a la instalación de plantas nucleares y el propio presidente Sebastián Piñera defendió esa opción tras el terremoto de Japón, que causó explosiones e incendios en plantas nucleares.

“Chile no puede renunciar a priori a ninguna alternativa en generación de energías”, dijo Piñera, después del terremoto, a pesar de que Chile también es un país sísmico. “La tecnología permite que la energía nuclear, sobre todo las tecnologías nuevas que se llaman smart, sean tecnologías absolutamente a prueba de terremotos en materia de seguridad. Y por tanto estamos estudiando esa opción”.

Pero El tema ya había cobrado actualidad antes del terremoto, ante la visita de la semana que viene del presidente estadounidense Barack Obama, quien promueve energías “limpias” y firmará con Piñera un acuerdo de cooperación en materia nuclear. Un acuerdo similar suscribió recientemente el ministro de Energía, Laurence Golborne, en Francia.

Los convenios fijan las pautas para la formación de técnicos chilenos, según ha trascendido, y alimentan la impresión de que se considera seriamente instalar plantas nucleares para la generación de energía.

Golborne precisa que esa decisión, en todo caso, “está bastante lejos”, pero insistió en que la opción

nuclear “es una posibilidad que no podemos dejar de estudiar”.

Los ambientalistas han reaccionado preocupados. “Es una tecnología muy riesgosa” en un país sísmico como Chile, afirmó el ecologista Mariano Rendón.

Por su parte Sara Larraín, directora de la organización ambientalista Chile Sustentable, sostiene que el interés estadounidense es una distracción y esconde el propósito de millonarios negocios de empresas estadounidenses.

“La opción nuclear no es mejor que el gas natural. Las plantas de nueva generación (nucleares) podrían tener dentro de su ciclo de vida una emisión equivalente a una de gas natural”, refuta Larraín.

Los ambientalistas señalan que el país carece de una política sólida de fomento de las energías sustentables y que la solución de las demandas de mayor energía debe incluir también una mayor eficiencia energética.

La académica de la Universidad de Chile Pilar Moraga, profesora de Derecho Ambiental, señala que “Chile tiene oportunidades que no está aprovechando” en cuanto a la generación limpia.

Chile es un país que cuenta con grandes extensiones desérticas de mucho sol, una larga costa de vientos fuertes, y siendo un país volcánico, muchos lugares con sitios geotérmicos también. El desarrollo de las energías renovables es escaso, a pesar de que una ley del 2005 estableció una meta progresiva del 10% de esas energías en la matriz energética con energías provenientes de esas fuentes.

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