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## Labor's election pledge: There will be no Speaker Boehner

By John Wojcik



Anyone betting that Republicans will take over one or both houses of Congress this November wasn't at the Battleground States Conference run by the AFL-CIO here in Washington in August.

Assembled at the Washington Convention Center were the people the nation's largest labor federation calls its "boots on the ground." They are the leaders it believes will turn the anger and frustration workers across the country are feeling into a resounding defeat for right-wing Republicans hoping to "turn back the clock" by seizing control of Congress on Election Day.

Among the early-morning crowd here were labor leaders with close ties to an array of community groups from selected "battleground states."

"Your states will swing this election and you will swing your states," AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka told the gathering.

He addressed what he said has been "a lot of talk" about an "enthusiasm gap" among progressive voters and "a lot of talk" about how progressives "don't want to go out and vote and have a pox on both your houses attitude towards this election."

"The Republican Party of No doesn't want our vote," Trumka declared. "All they want is for us to stay home. They want us to feel hopeless and dis-

gusted so they can come back by default."

At a Sept. 1 Labor Day press conference, Trumka pledged there will be no Speaker John Boehner.

"When workers have all the information they don't make the wrong choice, they make the right choice. That's why I can say very confidently, with our election program, there will be no Speaker of the House Boehner," he told reporters.

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At the Washington conference, James Andrews, president of the North Carolina AFL-CIO, told People's World that coalition-building has kept the labor movement alive even in the anti-labor, "right-to-work" atmosphere of the South. "It is this approach of coalition-building that also

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ended up turning North Carolina from red to blue in the 2008 elections," he said.

Andrews, who has a reputation in the labor movement for turning out ground troops for everything from marches and rallies to Election Day operations, himself personifies coalition-building.

As an active member of the NAACP and as a young worker in the early 1970s, he went to work in a pickle plant where he led a tough battle to organize the workers into a union - the old Amalgamated Meat Cutters union which later merged into the United Food and Commercial Workers.

Andrews said he is working now with his staff to see how many buses can be sent from North Carolina to the planned march for jobs here on Oct. 2. His approach, he said, will be to reach out to a large number of community groups, including African American churches.

Nick Unger, an AFL-CIO staff organizer, said the turnout on Oct. 2 will depend on the extent

to which unions across the country and their allies, particularly civil rights organizations and African American churches, get involved. He said he would not rule out a possible turnout of 100,000 or more at this point.

"One New York union, alone can bring tens of thousands," Unger said. "If, let's say, the federation in North Carolina brings 10 buses, that's 5,000, if 2,500 busses are filled that's 100,000. The AFL-CIO is endorsing this demonstration but it is the unions and the churches and the organizations across the country who, if they decide to make this their thing, will turn out the 100,000."

Unger said a big demonstration will boost labor's entire election program because "it gets people talking and it gets them energized, which is what you need for an election."



Pepe Lozano writes for the People's World.

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## The U.S. and Iraq: what now?

By PW Editorial Board

**S**ince President Obama took office, more than 90,000 U.S. troops have come home from Iraq. Last week, the Pentagon reported, the last U.S. combat brigade left. The question is: now what?

Actually there are several big questions. To what extent are "combat troops" being replaced by Special Operations forces, other U.S. personnel, and private contractor mercenaries?

Will all U.S. troops leave in December 2011, as the U.S.-Iraqi agreement specifies? What exactly is the U.S. role in Iraq between now and the end of 2011? And what will it be beyond that?

What is the U.S. responsibility to the Iraqi people, and how should it be fulfilled?

The president says the "transitional force" now remaining there will switch its focus from combat to "supporting and training Iraqi forces, partnering with Iraqis in counterterrorism missions." He told the veterans he wants to bring the Iraq war to a "responsible end."

Some Iraqis, most notably the Iraqi Commu-

nist Party - with a heroic record of resistance to Saddam Hussein's bloody dictatorship - warned that a U.S. invasion was not the way to get rid of Saddam.

Seven years later present the U.S. with a profound responsibility.

Yes we do have a responsibility to help Iraq train its armed forces and security personnel so they can protect their own people, and to provide them with the necessary resources, which the Bush administration failed miserably to do. But it's not our job to manipulate their economy or their politics, to pick and choose who should govern their country.

We do have a responsibility to help rebuild their hospitals, water systems, schools, cultural facilities - wrecked in the invasion or later under our watch or by our own contractors. But the U.S. should not be directing the money or deciding the projects

Let's make sure all of our occupation of Iraq ends.

**The U.S. should not be directing the money or deciding the projects.**

# Hands off Social Security

By John Bachtell

**A**ngered by Republican U.S. Senate candidate Mark Kirk's repeated votes against extension of unemployment compensation and jobs creation, protesters crashed a posh Kirk fundraiser here Aug. 26.

Chanting "Hands off Social Security" and "Jobs now!" demonstrators were blocked from entering.

"Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Ill) has voted against working families too many times, and (his election to the US Senate) isn't going to happen," said Siobhan Kolar of Chicago Jobs with Justice. "He's a liar and a flip-flopper and we need to stop him."

Kirk voted against the \$26 billion HR 1586 Education and Medicaid Assistance Act, which among other things saved the jobs of 161,000 teachers including 6 thousand in Illinois alone. The bill saved the jobs of 158,000 other public employees including firefighters and police.

Even with the bill's passage, 1,700 Chicago public school teachers and another 10,000 statewide will be fired adding to already over crowded classrooms.

Kirk said he voted against the bill to prevent the budget deficit from getting worse. Most progressive economists maintain the deficit will get far worse with higher unemployment and deeper cuts to public services.

Kirk has also voted against extension of unemployment compensation 6 times for the same reason despite a 12% unemployment rate in Illinois.

"In this economic time the people need a senator who is going to come in and work with the President and Congress to get resources back to communities, creating jobs and rebuilding the economy," said Rev. Michael Stinson, pastor of the General Assembly and Church of the First



Born. "Mark Kirk is out of touch."

"If the Republicans get control it's really going to be hard for President Obama to get legislation passed to rebuild this economy," said Stinson. "They want to go back to doing things like benefiting the upper crust of society and not the average people."

Protesters were also concerned about where Kirk stands on privatization of Social Security and Medicare and termination of the Children's Health Insurance Program. According to DeLane Adams, Illinois State Director of Americans United Change, Kirk has been mum for months on where he stands on the detailed GOP privatization proposal put forward by Rep. Paul Ryan (WI).

"There is a serious proposal for privatization from a Congressman who could one day be in a position to advance this Bush-era scheme for making Wall Street bankers richer. We are just hoping to get a straight answer from Rep. Kirk on how he would vote. Right now, we're left to wonder if Kirk's silence has anything to do with the more than half a million dollars he has taken from Wall Street interests this year," he said.

**Kirk voted against the \$26 billion HR 1586 Education and Medicaid Assistance Act.**

## Rally calls for GOP defeat

By Rick Nagin

**L**abor, civil rights, family farm and community allies rallied in Ashtabula Aug. 21. The occasion was the opening of the county Democratic headquarters, but the event had been initiated by a grassroots progressive coalition.

Wally Kaufman, vice president of the AFL-CIO Retirees Council, said he and activists from the NAACP, the Farmers Union and other groups had planned a picnic, but at the request of the Democrats, agreed to combine the event.

“We plan to set up an Ashtabula Progressive Forum to hear speakers and discuss issues, especially in relation to the elections,” he said.

Kim Parker, president of the Democratic Women’s Caucus welcomed about 50 people in attendance to the brightly lit storefront stressing the critical battle shaping up. George Williams, president of the NAACP, also gave words of greetings and an invocation.

Ray Gruber, president of the Ashtabula AFL-CIO, said labor was already making 20,000 calls a week, on behalf of its endorsed candidates, out of phone banks throughout the state.

He said the race for the U.S. Senate seat left open by the retirement of Republican Senator George Voinovich was critical. There could not be a clearer choice, he said, than between Lt. Gov. Lee Fisher, the Democrat, and Rob Portman, the Republican, who served as trade representative and budget director under President George W. Bush.

## Crimen organizado: parte del sistema en Guatemala

Por Pablo Monsanto

**D**ecenas de miles de guatemaltecos sufren hambre, y cientos de miles de niños están desnutridos y se mueren porque no tienen que comer. Esos guatemaltecos sí aguantan hambre porque el sistema los somete a sobrevivir en la total pobreza. Y, es, a este sistema al servicio principalmente del gran capital financiero nacional y extranjero al que ha servido el señor Alejandro Giammattei. Ex candidato presidencial del partido GANA [“Gran Alianza Nacional”].

La Comisión Nacional Contra la Impunidad en Guatemala [CICIG] ha puesto en evidencia, no sólo el involucramiento que tuvo Giammattei en prácticas violatorias a la ley y a los derechos humanos sino también ha puesto al descubierto sus vínculos con las acciones del crimen organizado y la mafia, a la cual también vinculan al ex ministro de Gobernación y al ex director de la Policía Nacional Civil.

Ya se ha evidenciado cómo operan las mafias desde los centros de detención y la relación que éstas han tenido con las más altas autoridades de Guatemala. En esa oportunidad se dijo que las mafias les pagaban una cuota a todos los funcionarios, empezando por el Ministro, el jefe de la policía, y los encargados del sistema penitenciario.

Quedó en el ambiente que había una conexión entre las “maras” [pan-

dillas criminales] y las autoridades a quienes les pagaban una cuota mensual de lo obtenido en sus actividades delictivas.

Las personas han sido asesinadas una tras otra, hasta borrar toda prueba o pista que relacione a los responsables y a las más altas autoridades de los poderes del Estado involucradas en el gobierno anterior.

Resulta, lamentable y hasta ridículo que algunos medios de comunicación, columnistas e instituciones que siempre han pregonado por el fortalecimiento del Estado de derecho, el absoluto respeto a las leyes, y que todos sin excepción debemos someternos a la majestuosidad de la ley, ya que nadie es superior a la misma, ahora, que representantes de un gobierno del que fueron o se sintieron parte, son investigados y/o encarcelados, defiendan oficiosamente a los implicados manipulando los hechos y no confíen en la imparcialidad de una Corte Suprema de Justicia que resulto electa de un proceso de elección que ellos impulsaron y vigilaron, además, que ahora cuestionen la calidad del trabajo investigativo de la CICIG cuando hace algún tiempo le dieron su total confianza y respaldo, todo esto, porque creyeron que la CICIG se convertiría en el instrumento ideal para llevar ante la justicia exclusivamente a sus adversarios políticos.