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New immigration bill introduced in Senate

By Emile Schepers

On Sept. 29, just before Congress recessed for the midterm elections, Democratic Senators Robert Menendez (New Jersey) and Patrick Leahy (Vermont) introduced a comprehensive immigration reform bill in the Senate. Although to some this seems to be an odd moment to be introducing such a thing, Menendez, Leahy and some immigrant rights activists think there is a chance of getting it passed during the lame duck session, between the election and the inauguration of the new Congress in January 2011.

The bill, S 3932, has no cosponsors as yet. It is pitched to the right of the main comprehensive immigration reform bill in the House of Representatives, HR 4321, and contains elements of an abortive attempt at a bill proposed by Senators Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., and Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., which was discussed earlier this year. The Schumer-Graham bill was dropped by Graham when the Republicans decided that they could get more electoral mileage out of immigrant-bashing.

The authoritative Immigration Policy Center has done a thorough preliminary analysis of the new 874-page bill's major points.

The approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants thought to be in this country will be given a chance to legalize themselves. This will en-



tail paying fines, learning English and surviving a provisional "Lawful Protected Immigrant" status for six years. Persons who have committed serious crimes cannot qualify, but immigrants will not be excluded on the basis of having used a false Social Security number to work. During this time, they will be able to work and, extremely important to many immigrants, travel back and forth to visit their families. After six years they can become legal permanent residents eligible for eventual U.S.

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citizenship.

Legal immigration categories will be refigured to allow more immigration for family unity and for work, which is intended to make it easier to come here legally and thus cut down on the pressure to come without documents. A biparti-

The situation of immigrant families in this country has become so dire that there is no backing down.

san commission will be created to determine legal immigration quotas for the future.

There will be a new guest worker program, called H-2C, for areas of the U.S. economy in which there is supposedly a shortage of labor. Though this component includes supposed safeguards against abuse, they will be hard to enforce and this item is likely to be opposed by most of organized labor.

There are a number of new initiatives on border and internal enforcement. After five years, all employers in the United States will be required to electronically verify an employee's authorization to work in the United States. A new electronic Social Security card will be phased in.

There will be programs to ensure that immigrants detained by the government will not be abused, will have access to health care and attorneys' services, and will not be separated from their minor children.

The DREAM and AgJobs acts are included in their entirety.

The week after S 3932 was introduced, the

Department of Homeland Security announced a record figure of 392,862 deportations for the 2010 fiscal year. Homeland Security claims that the number of "criminal aliens" deported is up to half of the total and the number of ordinary undocumented immigrants is down.

The crackdown on criminal and undocumented aliens, plus the "enforcement" and "guest worker" elements included in the Menendez-Leahy bill are presented as part of a strategy to attract Republican support for comprehensive immigration reform. So far, it does not seem to be working.

At the beginning of the Obama administration, immigrants' rights activists had pressed the White House and Congress to move quickly on comprehensive immigration reform precisely because they feared that if this was left to the last minute, the issue would collide with the racist demagoguery of the election season and reform would be doomed.



Emile Schepers writes for the People's World.

Beck vs. One Nation

By PW Editorial Board

How do you judge a rally's success? That question came to mind when reading press comparisons of the Oct. 2 One Nation Working Together rally to Glenn Beck's Restoring Honor event. Writers in the capitalist press claim Beck's affair was larger, suggesting a bigger base and greater momentum for the Republican right.

However, considering the platform and social base of both events, this is an odd comparison, a pairing of apples with rotten tomatoes.

Assembled on Oct. 2 were Asian, black, brown, Native American, white, gay and straight men and women decked out in red, blue and white T-shirts. They came from trade unions, universities, churches, mosques and synagogues, with signs defending the president, calling for jobs, for repeal of "don't ask, don't tell," or "hands off Social Security."

Another measure of Oct. 2 may be its politics: from platform speeches to the participants. It was decidedly anti-right-wing, anti-corporate,

and pro-working class and pro-American-people.

Two themes stood out: that the politics of the Republican right wing are against the national interest, and that the central task of the times is solve the jobs crisis.

"It's time to fight for jobs" said one enthusiastic young woman. "It's about people standing up to the corporations," boomed Ed Schultz, the MSNBC news commentator.

Enthusiasm was tempered by anger and concern: anger not at the president, but at the inertia in Congress and the obstructionism of the GOP.

Beck and Palin's rally was overwhelmingly white. And for its politics, they took a page from Louis Farrakhan's Million Man March in 1995 and the earlier Promise Keepers and stayed away from controversial issues. After all who opposes honoring men and women in uniform?

A few years ago a movement was born. It is still young; its steps uncertain. Yet if the politics, composition, enthusiasm and fighting stance of the coalition assembled in Washington on Oct. 2 is any indication, it is well on its way.

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95,000 more jobs are lost

By John Wojcik

Over 95,000 jobs were lost in September because the private sector added only 64,000 jobs while government employment went down by 159,000.

Local and state governments slashed 83,000 jobs, the latest report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics said, the fastest rate of job cuts by them in 30 years. 58,000 of those job losses were in education.

The new jobs data released by the Labor Department show the nation's September unemployment rate remained unchanged from August at 9.6 percent.

The 64,000 new jobs added is less than half of what is required to absorb new entrants into the labor force.

Economists say that to lower the jobless rate to 6 percent by 2013, the economy needs to add 350,000 jobs a month.

Another alarming figure below the radar of the official reports is that the number of workers who are underemployed, which includes those who have given up their job search, rose to 17.6 percent from 16.7 percent in August, meaning more than 26 million American workers are without jobs or full-time work.

The figures make even more shocking the actions of leading GOP officials who seem to be looking for ways to kill even more jobs.

On Oct. 10 New Jersey's Republican governor Chris Christie killed the largest public transit project in the nation, a commuter train tunnel under the Hudson River to Manhattan. The move stunned almost everyone because work on the tunnel had already begun and the state has already spent \$600 million of the \$3 billion in federal stimulus funds allocated to New Jersey for the project. Layoffs of some of the 6,000 construction



workers needed for the job have already begun.

Terry O'Sullivan, president of the Laborers' union, said, "We can't afford to let our nation's basics deteriorate further, and we can't continue to let so many people go without work when there's so much important work to be done."

The AFL-CIO, in its statement on the jobs report, quoted remarks made at a Machinists' rally for unemployed workers by an unemployed worker who spent 35 years in the construction trades: "I'm 53 years old, and I've been kicked to the curb with no job, no insurance and now no home and no unemployment left. And yet I still believe in this country's democracy. I hope and pray that someday this will all end, and we can wake up from this nightmare. Hopefully Congress can get off their butts and do something for the great people of the United States."

The federation statement blasted corporations for sitting on their profits and not using their money to create jobs.

The AFL-CIO has been calling for a public-investment led recovery based on infrastructure and education to quicken growth and create jobs.

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One Nation boosts progressive links in Texas

By Jim Lane

North Texas progressive activists recently reviewed the effect of the national One Nation Working Together coalition on their efforts. First, they looked at Texas participation. The Texas NAACP said that they sent a full bus to Washington plus another 40 or so individuals went by airplane. Individuals from a number of other cities went, including Houston, and Jobs with Justice activists from the North Texas chapter. An independent farmer in Cleburne attempted to organize a bus on his own, and ended up sending two carloads to DC.

The Texas State Employees Union took time out from their meeting in Austin to hold an Oct. 2 rally at the State Capitol. Texas AFL-CIO President Becky Moeller joined the two top Democratic Party candidates, Bill White for governor and Linda Chavez-Thompson for lieutenant governor, on the podium. Almost all of the estimated 175 participants were state workers.

Several North Texas progressive organizations converged to increase their connections during the lead-up to October 2. The Dallas chapter of the NAACP, the Dallas Peace Center, North Texas Jobs with Justice, the Fair Budget Campaign, and others pulled together under the effective leadership of Kelli Obazee, the new director of the Dallas Peace Center. Even though the local AFL-CIO was missing from the coalition, as it apparently was throughout the state during this busy election season, the group drew three labor speakers, including one important local union president.

Venezuela: triunfo relativo

Por Alberto Ampuero

De acuerdo con los datos actualizados del Consejo Nacional Electoral, el partido del presidente Hugo Chávez, el Socialista Unido de Venezuela (PSUV) se adjudicó 98 de los 165 puestos de la Asamblea Nacional, la opositora Mesa de la Unidad Democrática (MUD) tendrá 64 legisladores.

El gobierno seguirá teniendo mayoría en el Parlamento.

Lo “suficiente para continuar profundizando el socialismo bolivariano y democrático”, dijo Chávez; aunque no para lo que desea hacer, de haberse obtenido una mayoría de dos tercios (con 110 legisladores) que se requiere para fundar una nueva economía, un nuevo estado, una nueva sociedad.

En otras palabra, el gobierno no podrá adelantar leyes de grueso calibre, llamadas orgánicas, ni modificar la Constitución. Ahí nace la diferencia y la novedad respecto de lo que existía.

La oposición de derecha y de los grandes medios de información se agarraron a esa rama para interpretarlo como un “fracaso del chavismo y un triunfo de la oposición” porque el PSUV no consiguió los 110 votos necesarios.

¿Cómo explicar que no se lograran los 110 escaños y se rompiera con el dominio de la Asamblea Legislativa?

Hay varias razones. La inseguridad que hace que Venezuela sea el país con mayor índice de homicidios del continente. (La oposición hizo del tema de la inseguridad una de sus banderas de campaña). Una inflación galopante que alcanza el 19.9 por ciento anual. (La pérdida del poder adquisitivo de los venezolanos se expresa en la alta inflación). la corrupción incrustada en todas las esferas del aparato estatal.

A esto se le suman los cortes de suministro de luz y agua que padeció la población a principios de año, según el gobierno, debido a la grave sequía, y para la oposición evidencia la ineficiencia de las instituciones gubernamentales.

Sin duda la principal señal del retroceso electoral se encuentran en el sustrato local instalado en el ánimo de los electores, o como afirmó alguien: “La existencia cotidiana determinó la conciencia del votante”.

Por otro lado, el universo chavista, compuesto por 14 millones de personas entendió que no se jugaba el destino inmediato del proceso en su conjunto, ni el Presidente, sino su poco sentida expresión parlamentaria y, en ese terreno, no encontró los mejores candidatos. Alrededor del 70 por ciento de ellos fueron percibidos como “desconocidos”, “no representativos”, “no queridos” o directamente “rechazados”.

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