GOP pushes closer to a government shutdown

By John Wojcik

Democratic lawmakers and others warned that as Republicans continue to play their dangerous game of “chicken” with the federal budget and debt ceiling, the chances of avoiding a government shutdown in five days are becoming slimmer and slimmer.

“House Republicans are actually determined to shut down the government if they can’t defund Obamacare,” declared Rep. Frank Pallone, D-N.J., last night on national television. Pallone issued his warning on MSNBC’s Rachel Maddow Show: “They are determined to shut down the government despite widespread bipartisan disagreement by the American people.”

The union that represents millions of federal government workers, AFGE, said yesterday that it is in full mobilization mode against the impending shutdown. The federal government employs 2.15 million workers nationwide, with the Postal Service employing another 909,000. The union says the government will declare almost all the federal workers “non-essential,” sending them home in event of a government shutdown.

“It’s like taking the government employees hostage and saying, ‘We won’t let them come to work unless we’re given what we want,’” said Charles Teifer, law professor at the University of Baltimore and former deputy general counsel of the U.S. House of Representatives. “It’s taking a couple of million of government employees hostage.”

Washington D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray (D), whose city budget must be approved by Congress, declared yesterday, in an effort to prevent his city from grinding to a halt next week, that every D.C. worker is “essential.” A shutdown would send home the 32,000 people who keep the nation’s capital running every day.

One of the many but less-talked about effects of a shutdown will be its toll on the civil rights and the workplace rights of all Americans.

“A government shutdown means no Equal Employment Opportunities Commission to en-
force the Civil Rights Act and the other laws barring workplace discrimination,” said Gabrielle Martin, president of AFGE’s National Council of Equal Employment Opportunity Locals. The last time Republicans shut down the government was in 1995. Americans blamed them, not then-President Clinton for the shutdown by huge margins. The following year, Clinton was re-elected despite Republican majorities in both houses of Congress.

With the shutdown now looming, Americans say overwhelmingly that it is unacceptable for either a president or members of Congress to threaten a government shutdown in order to achieve their goals, according to a new CBS/New York Times poll.

Eighty percent of Americans say threatening a government shutdown is not an acceptable way to negotiate; only 16 percent think it is. Majorities of Democrats, Republicans, and independents all agreed that shutdown of government is not a way to negotiate.

While shutdowns have been threatened and have actually happened before, this one is seen as radically different. For the first time ever, the shutdown threat is being used as a tool to achieve repeal of duly-passed legislation (Obamacare).

“This seems quite beyond the pale,” said Sarah Binder, a political science professor at George Washington University. “It seems that during most of these previous (shutdown) episodes, an agreement was in theory within reach, because the players were at the table. The previous shutdowns tended to occur in the midst of negotiations. That doesn’t seem to be the case this time.”

Louis Fisher, who has specialized in separation of powers over more than 30 years at the Congressional Research Service and the Library of Congress said he was “shocked” when he first saw what he now recognizes as a foreshadowing of today’s crisis, when Republican senators refused for two years to confirm Richard Cordray – or anyone else, for that matter - to run the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau unless President Obama agreed to change the bureau’s structure. “That’s really amazing, to say you’re not going to confirm unless the underlying statute or law is rewritten. That’s breathtaking to me.”

80 percent of Americans say threatening a government shutdown is not an acceptable way to negotiate.

Obama at the UN

By PW Editorial Board

President Obama strained in his United Nations speech to explain the rationale behind U.S. foreign policy.

It was a curious and contradictory spectacle as the president who brought home the troops from Iraq and Afghanistan in the same breath defended his administration’s indefensible actions in Libya, drone warfare, and NSA spying on citizen and ally alike.

Had not regime change occurred in Libya under the guise of humanitarian intervention? Wasn’t the visit of Brazil’s president postponed in outrage over NSA spying? Have there not been untold civilian causalities from drone attacks? And yet the president sought to cast away charges of imperialism and empire with rhetorical “we’re-the-good-guy” asides even as he revealed one of the underlying bases of U.S. foreign policy: “The United States of America is prepared to use all elements of our power, including military force, to secure our core interests in the region,” asserted the president. “We will ensure the free flow of energy from the region to the world.” A more blatant exposition of U.S. imperialist oil interests is hard to find.

Note must be taken of the president’s positive response to overtures from Iran and highlighting the need for a solution to the Israel/Palestine conflict with a two-state solution. Regarding the crime of nerve gas in Syria, however, the president while pledging continuing diplomacy maintained the now usual military bluster. For lasting peace to be achieved the U.S. ship of state must be turned around. A first step should be away from an unconditional defense of American exceptionalism. Yes there are many exceptional things about the U.S. including this president’s election, a point noted by the Nobel Committee, which awarded the then new incumbent its Peace Prize. Our exceptionalness however hardly stands alone.

Each country contributes an exceptional thread to the fabric of humanity. It’s time for the U.S. to blend in, Mr. President, not stand out and alone.

It’s time for the U.S. to blend in, Mr. President, not stand out and alone.
West Hollywood first city to ban sale of fur

By Blake Deppe

For the first time in this country’s history, the Californian city of West Hollywood has banned the sale of fur, in keeping with its tradition of upholding the values of animals and their wellbeing. Though city council members passed the law by unanimous vote two years ago, it finally went into effect ast week year on Sept. 21.

The development came days after the city passed an ordinance banning all entertainment acts, including circuses, that use wild or exotic animals, making this a twin victory for animal rights supporters and activists.

It follows a history of pro-animal legislation in West Hollywood, including the banning of steel-jaw traps and cosmetic testing on animals in 1989; the banning of cat de-clawing in 2003; and the banning of the retail sale of cats and dogs in 2010, which pushed people to adopt from animal shelters instead. It seems that the city is well on its way toward achieving its purported mission of becoming “the Humane Capitol of the Nation.”

Retail stores will have to clear fur products off their shelves by Sept. 28 or face $800 fines. Predictably, many are decrying the ordinance, with Mayfair House, a specialty clothing store on Beverly Blvd., going as far as to claim it is “unconstitutional.” Store owner Johanna Judah thought the ordinance was “ill-considered ... and harmful to the city and its consumer citizens and business residents,” as well as a supposed attempt by animal rights activists to “impose their will over others.”

Mayor pro tempore John D’Amico argued that there is no ethical way to produce fur, and that the ban will ultimately not harm businesses. “This city is not in the business of curtailing businesses,” he said. “Someone who is disconnected from the goals of the city and has a rigid point of view on fur” may not understand that.

Some business owners, however, do understand, and support the ban. One of them is David Malvaney, cofounder of Church Boutique, an avant-garde fashion shop. “We are on board with the ban,” he said, “as we understand the concerns and have realized there are many other fabrics and fibers that can easily take the place of real fur. We feel that the desire for real fur will lessen over time as more people become aware of the process to which the animals are subjected, and I believe more cities will adopt a similar ordinance.”

Retail stores will have to clear fur products off their shelves or face $800 fines.
Lucha a favor de manifestantes por $15

Por Kelly Sinclair y Texas Media Collec-

ucha a favor de manifes-
tantes s - Por la Calle Guadal-
upe los trabajadores de res-
taurantes de comida rápida
marcharon, no lejos de la cuna de los
trabajadores de “cuellos blancos” de
la Universidad de Texas. Un grupo
Sirve al otro, en más de una manera,
pero los manifestantes atrajeron las
bocinazos de apoyo de los automo-
biles que pasaban, y los apaluchos de
los espectadores.
Una multidud de más de 150 per-
sonas hacian el grito de los manifes-
tantes de “Luchar por los 15”. Quince
dólares como salario de trabajo. El
derelojo a organizarse sin represal-
ias de sus empleadores. El derecho
da la dignidad y condiciones seguras
de trabajo. Estos son los derechos
básicos del trabajador, logrados por
una lucha fuerte del movimiento lab-
oral, pero malamente erosionados en
decadas por las ventajas corporativas
contra la parte menos poderosa de la
fuerza trabajadora.
El gobiernofederal, encargado
to velar las condiciones del lugar de
trabajo, ha puesto la mínima aten-
ción. Este ataque de doble golpe, sin
embargo ha llevado a un gran logro:
Ha encendido la oposición de una
generación de grupos ciudadanos y
activistas que abogar por los traba-
jadores, muchas veces juntos a los
sindicatos existentes.
Amulio Manriquez, un coordina-
dor con el Proyecto de Defensa de los
Trabajadores, dijo, “Estamos aqui hoy
en solidaridad con los trabajadores de
comidas rápidas porque el trabajador
merece un salario justo y dignidad
y poder cuidar a su familia. Mucha
gente en este país no son capaces de
hacerlo ahora aunque supuestamente
este es el más rico del mundo.
Los organizadores repartieron
pamfletos que explican la causa. Gru-
opos participantes que apoyan a los
hueguistas incluían al AFL-CIO de
Texas, el Concilio Central de Austin,
el SEIU, AFT de Texas, IBEW, Sindi-
cato de Pintores, El Proyecto de Dere-
chos Civiles de Texas, Las Panteras
Grises, Proyecto en Defensa de los
Trabajadores, Ocupar a Austin, y el
Gremio nacional de abogados, que
proveyo apoyo legal.
De acuerdo al Bureau of Labor
Statistics, el salario corriente federal
es $7.25, mientras el salario prome-
dio del trabajador de comida rápida
del centro de Texas hacia $8.33 por
hora en 2012. Para alguien que tra-
baja a tiempo completo, que sale a
$15,080 y $18.366.40 respectiva-
mente, antes de impuestos cada año,
o $290 y $353.20 por semana.
Contrario, el salario promedio de
los trabajadores del area de Austin,
independientemente de la industria,
es mucho más alto - $17.12.
“El Uno Por Ciento necesa-
ta regresar algo”, Manriquez, senaló,
“porque sin esta gente nada funciona-
ría, nada se construiría, nadie tendría
alimento. Ellos deben tener una parte
justa del pastel”.

D.C. unions condemn Walmart vote

By Mark Gruenberg

The leader of Washington, D.C.’s
Central Labor Council says union
members and workers citywide
will remember which city council
members voted for Walmart in upholding
Mayor Vincent Gray’s veto of legislation re-
quiring a $12.50 minimum wage for work-
ers at non-union big box retailers in the Na-
tion’s Capital.
The council initially passed the Large
Retailer Accountability Act, 8-5. Passage led
Walmart, the monster anti-worker retailer,
to threaten to cancel its planned six stores
in poor neighborhoods. Walmart is known
for its vicious anti-worker actions, its labor
law-breaking, low prices, and its notoriously
low wages and benefits. But it claims to cre-
ate jobs - a claim unions and their allies say
studies disprove.
Walmart’s jobs claim swayed Gray, a
Democrat. The override vote on Sept. 17 was
7-6, with nine votes needed to overturn his
veto.
D.C. Labor Council President Jocelyn
Williams said “While we thank those who
stood with workers, those who did not must
know that their actions will have conse-
quences.”
And the Washington Post reported
that supporters of the law, who jammed the
council chambers for the vote, chanted “We
won’t forget!” and “Recall!” Several, while
leaving the room, stopped to point at Wells
and Bowser, while holding signs that said
“My next mayor supports the Large Retailer
Accountability Act.”