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Support grows for immigration reform

By Emile Schepers

While the Senate Judiciary Committee carries out a second week of “markup” (voting on amendments) of S 744, the massive immigration reform bill drafted by the bipartisan “Gang of Eight”, evidence grows that the country is increasingly in favor of solving the immigration problem by means of measures that include a break for undocumented workers and their families.

On Monday, a group of organizations that include the AFL-CIO, the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund, United We Dream, the National Day Labor Organizing Network and scores of others came out with a statement calling not just for progressive immigration reform, but also the suspension of deportation of people likely to gain the right to stay in the United States if such legislation passes. They further called on the president to immediately issue an order to this effect.

MALDEF's General Counsel, Thomas A. Saenz, said in a press statement: “It is a simple matter of fairness and justice that we cease removing those immigrants who would be eligible for relief under the proposed bipartisan immigration reform legislation. The American people and bipartisan leaders nationwide support providing legal protections to those who have labored in our



industry and raised families in our community; it would be cruel and nonsensical to deny widely supported and contemplated relief to some, simply because of a delayed effective date.”

Although the government has in the past argued that this is not legally possible, the supporters of the move say that it is and point to the fact that the Obama administration itself issued such a suspension of deportation for young people who would be eligible for the DREAM Act, via the so-

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called DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) Program.

The position taken by the AFL-CIO and the other organizations is roughly congruent with the demand for a “moratorium” on deportation which has arisen from the grassroots of the immigrants’

The AFL-CIO and other organizations demand a “moratorium” on deportation.

rights movement since the failure of immigration reform legislation in 2006-2007.

The administration has, in the past, rejected expansion of this idea, stating fear that it might annoy the Republicans and thus undermine the chances of immigration reform legislation’s passage. However, Ana Avendaño, point person on immigration for the AFL-CIO says that immigration reform is on a roll and thus will not be undermined by the demand.

In fact, a new survey shows that in spite of a decades long effort by the right to play African-Americans and mostly Latino immigrants against each other, support for immigration reform and the legalization of the undocumented is solid within the African-American community.

The survey, carried out by Lake Research Partners, shows 66 percent of African American respondents supporting this kind of immigration reform, with only 16 percent against.

At the leadership level, African-American congresspersons and other community leaders have been consistently supportive of progressive immigration reform and the struggle for the rights of immigrant workers. Their conceptualization of

the immigrants’ rights movement as part of the overall fight for the rights of minorities appears to have had, in general, a stronger impact than the effort of others to portray immigrants and Latinos as inevitable economic rivals, according to this poll. Other polls have consistently shown that the majority of the U.S. population overall (of all races) supports some sort of progressive immigration reform that allows otherwise law abiding undocumented workers to legalize themselves.

However, there is disquiet in the African-American leadership about one aspect of the present Senate bill, S 744, because, at the insistence of the Republican members of the “Gang of Eight,” it eliminates the annual permanent resident visa lottery, which currently is one of the few ways in which African and West Indian people can hope to get permission to immigrate to the USA.

The lottery gives out only 55,000 permanent resident “green cards” per year, but unless it is restored its elimination will have the effect of reducing opportunities for would-be African and Caribbean immigrants.



Emile Schepers writes for Peoplesworld.org

Say no to austerity

By PW Editorial

Republicans are committed to the belief that the only way out of the economic crisis is through austerity for the people. Clearly many Democrats as well buy into this profits-before-people policy.

Austerity policies are being rejected in Europe and everywhere working people have the means and will to fight back. In the United States, the majority of the voters rejected the austerity platform of the GOP in 2008 and 2012, but the idea has still not gone away.

Austerity is aimed at the working class not the wealthy who are making record profits.

Let’s be clear: it was not the unions, seniors, immigrants, children, black, brown and white workers, or the disabled who brought this country to its knees. It was finance capital, and that’s who has the means to pay for the crisis. Forcing them to do so is the challenge all democratic and progressive forces face.

The basic arguments used by the Republicans to fire massive numbers of unionized public

workers, to deny needed government created jobs, push for privatization and destroy Social Security are based on what has been shown to be bogus math.

Austerity policies, in addition to being wrong headed, have a sharp racist edge. The black and brown Americans with the highest rates of unemployment and poverty will be the most affected by the cutbacks. Thus fighting austerity means fighting racism. It means fighting for women’s equality. Single moms are special victims of austerity.

Austerity will have a huge impact on senior citizens many of whom rely on Social Security as their sole means of support. Indeed, most of the 60 million Social Security recipients are barely making it and should get a raise, not cuts. It also should be remembered that this constituency votes. Rather than cutting back on Social Security let’s “scrap the cap” on payroll taxes and stop playing with people’s lives. The fight would bring people together. And it can be won.

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Milwaukee low wage workers strike

By Joseph Zimmermann

Taking their cue from workers in St. Louis, Chicago, New York and Detroit, fast food workers took to the streets of Milwaukee on Wednesday in a one-day work stoppage to demand a \$15.00 an hour wage.

Workers came from behind the cash registers and out of the kitchens of such flagship fast food companies as McDonald's, Burger King and Wendy's.

Low wage retailers such as Simply Fashion and Foot Action also saw their employees walk out in unity to demand the right to form a union without fear of retaliation. Union and community groups stood with the workers in their demand for a living wage.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported that the strike action "ended in a late-afternoon rally in the middle of W. Wisconsin Ave. in front of The Shops at Grand Avenue, where Katina Carter, organizer with Wisconsin Jobs Now, told more than 200 demonstrators that wages have to increase for the benefit of local economies. 'How can Milwaukee neighborhoods survive if we don't have enough money to put back into them?' she asked."

Milwaukee McDonald's employee Stephanie Sanders noted, "About 65% of the jobs added since the recession have been low-wage ones and unfortunately, the Economic Policy Institute projects that one out of every four workers will be in low-wage jobs by 2020."

Commenting on the nationwide phenomenon of unorganized workers taking to the streets Sanders said, "Fast food and retail outlets are the 'new'



one-day action. JSonline quotes Phil Neuenfeldt, president of the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO as saying, "The Wisconsin State AFL-CIO is proud to stand in solidarity with striking fast food workers whose actions today are calling attention to income inequality, worker exploitation, and the right to a living wage and to a union."

The protest comes on the heels of a shocking report released in April that revealed Wisconsin to have the highest rate of incarcerated African American males in the nation.

In an opinion-editorial published earlier this month in the Journal Sentinel, John Pawasarat, director of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Employment and Training Institute wrote, "Prison time is the most serious barrier to employment for Wisconsin male workers, making ex-offender populations the most difficult to place and sustain in full-time employment. When driver's licensing history is also considered, transportation barriers make successful labor force attachment even less likely."

Low wage jobs, such as fast food and discount retail, remain the only option for many of those struggling to feed their families.

One out of every four workers will be in low-wage jobs by 2020.

Baltimore joins civil rights march to D.C.

By Cindy Farquhar & Jim Baldridge

Nearly 200 marchers and supporters gathered in a poverty-stricken East Baltimore Saturday to kick off a civil rights march to Washington, DC, demanding, “Jobs Not Jails,” support for Immigrant Rights, “Hands Off Social Security, Medicare, and Health Care” and an end to police brutality.

The rally and march were endorsed by the Baltimore Central Labor Council and by a number of worker, peace, and civil rights organizations.

People came in groups from as far away as Rhode Island, California and Alabama to join the march to commemorate the 45th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s 1968 “Poor People’s Campaign.” The marchers expected to arrive Sunday afternoon at Freedom Plaza in Washington, the site created in 2010 by Occupy DC.

One marcher said he was just diagnosed with cardiac arrhythmia. When asked what caused it, the marcher replied, “Capitalism. Low paying jobs - when I should have been taking care of my body and eating well.”

Another marcher was a union steward who works at Ft. Meade, one of many federal employees who work in childcare and other support services for enlisted personnel. She reported that recently all the hotels on military bases were outsourced to the Holiday Inn and all employees have to reapply for their jobs.

The Baltimore rally was led by the Baltimore chapter head of SCLC Rev. C.E. Witherspoon.

Se aumenta apoyo a reforma inmigratoria

Por Emil Schepers

El Comité Judicial del Senado estadounidense sigue realizando su segunda semana de “enmiendas” (o sea, votación sobre las enmiendas) de S 744, la propuesta de tamaño abrumador para reformar las leyes de inmigración, preparada por la “Pandilla de los Ocho” (“Gang of Eight”) que consta de miembros de los dos partidos mayoritarios. Mientras tanto, se ha hecho cada vez más evidente que la mayor parte del país está a favor de resolver el problema inmigratorio al tomar medidas que incluyen una oportunidad prometedora para los trabajadores indocumentados y sus familias.

El lunes, un grupo de organizaciones que incluyen la AFL-CIO, la Defensa Legal y Fondo Educativo de los Mexicano-Americanos, Unidos Soñamos, la Red Organizadora de Jornaleros y muchos más emitieron una declaración en la cual insistieron no sólo en la reforma progresista sobre la inmigración sino también en acabar con las deportaciones de los a quienes, con toda probabilidad se les concedería el derecho de permanecer en EE.UU. si se aprobara dicha propuesta de ley. Además, le pidieron al presidente que emitiera inmediatamente una orden a ese fin.

El Consejero Legal General de MALDEF, el Sr. Thomas A. Saenz, observó en una comunicación de prensa: “Es sencillamente una cuestión

equidad y justicia que desistamos de deportar a aquellos inmigrantes que pudieran reunir los requisitos para alivio bajo la legislación propuesta por los dos partidos para la reforma de las leyes inmigratorias. El Pueblo estadounidense y los líderes por todo el país de los dos partidos principales están a favor de proveer protecciones legales a los que han trabajado en nuestras industrias y criado familias en nuestras comunidades; sería cruel e insensato negarles a algunos el alivio que tantos favorecen y esperan, simplemente debido a una demora en la fecha de vigencia”.

A pesar de que el gobierno en el pasado ha tomado la postura de que esto no es legalmente factible, los que apoyan este cambio dicen que sí lo es y señalan el hecho de que la misma administración de Obama emitió una orden de desistir de deportar a menores de edad quienes pudieran reunir los requisitos del Acta DREAM, por medio del programa conocido como DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals o sea, Acción diferida para los que llegan como niños).

La postura al respecto que toma la AFL-CIO y otras organizaciones es esencialmente consistente con la que exige que se ponga tregua (“moratorium”) a las deportaciones, una actitud que ha surgido de las bases del movimiento para los derechos de los inmigrantes a partir del fracaso de la legislación de 2006-2007 que intentó reformar las leyes inmigratorias.

NATIONAL CONTACT

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