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Unions push immigration reform on Capitol Hill

By Mark Gruenberg



Backed by strong statements from AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka and Service Employees President Mary Kay Henry, dozens of local union leaders from around the nation descended on Capitol Hill starting on June 12 for a big push for comprehensive immigration reform.

They lobbied lawmakers to create a path to admission and eventual citizenship of undocumented people in the United States, plus an immigration system that protects workers and raises wages for all.

Their campaign came as senators started work on legislation along those lines, which President Barack Obama backs. Senate leaders want to approve the comprehensive immigration reform bill by July 4. The federation also sent activists to offices of 27 senators nationwide.

Trumka and Henry helped launch the latest drive at a White House press conference on June 11, after President Obama made the point that venal and vicious employers exploit the undocumented workers. All workers are hurt, he said.

Obama said that the “vast majority” of undocumented people are “just looking to provide for their families and contribute to their communities.

“Too often, they’re forced to do what they do in a shadow economy where shady employers can exploit them,” the president said, “by paying less than the minimum wage, making them work without overtime, not giving them any benefits. That pushes down standards for all workers. It’s bad for everybody. Because all the businesses that do play by the rules, that hire people legally, that pay them fairly, they’re at a competitive disadvantage.

T H I S W E E K :

- Unions push immigration reform on Capitol Hill
- House GOP defeated on prevailing wages
- Detroit remembers King’s “I Have a Dream”
- Las trabajadoras del hogar también cuentan
- “Nuns on the Bus” tour for immigration reform

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American workers end up being at a competitive disadvantage. It’s not fair. But that’s the broken system that we have today.” That’s one big reason that organized labor strongly backs comprehensive immigration reform. Analysis of the proposed legislation shows it would immediately bring un-

President Obama made the point that venal and vicious employers exploit undocumented workers.

documented workers, the vast majority of the 11 million undocumented overall, under U.S. labor laws, including the National Labor Relations Act with its guarantee for the right to organize, even before they seek permanent citizenship in the U.S.

“What you see here is probably the broadest coalition of American society that’s ever been assembled,” Trumka said. “You have business, you have labor, you have law enforcement, you have entrepreneurs -- we have groups from all over the place, and we all agree on several things. We all agree, one, that the system is broken; two, that we need comprehensive immigration reform and we need it now.

“It will be good for not only newcomers or immigrants, but it will be good for every worker,” he declared. “It will be good for business. It will be good for the economy. And that’s why all of us have come together to try to push and get this thing done this year. Because every day that we wait is a day wasted and a day that we’ve lost, a day that the economy won’t grow.”

“Members of SEIU are proud to stand with people from all walks of life to insist that the time is now, just as the president said, that we need

commonsense immigration reform,” added Henry, whose union includes tens of thousands of immigrant workers.

“We want safe and secure borders. We want a pathway to citizenship for 11 million immigrants. And we want to be able to restore economic fairness across this economy. And we stand proudly with the rest of the sectors from all across the walks of life represented here today to insist that the Senate needs to move this now.”

Since June 11, SEIU has spent more than \$1 million to buy advertising on national cable television networks, urging constituents to call their senators and advocate the comprehensive immigration bill.

“These ads show the breadth of support for common sense immigration reform and highlight the diverse voices that are integral to moving this debate forward,” Henry explained. The ads feature law enforcement officials, small business owners, veterans, the youth called “Dreamers,” who were brought to the U.S. as children, and Republican voters who call on the Senate to act.



Mark Gruenberg edits Press Associates.

House GOP defeated on prevailing wages

By PW Editorial

The Republican Party has proved itself once again to be vehemently against organized labor.

By a 231-192 tally, yet another House Republican move to trash workers’ rights and incomes - by repealing the Davis-Bacon Act’s requirement that firms constructing federal projects pay locally prevailing wages - went down the drain on June 4.

Thirty-six Republicans defected from the party consensus against Davis-Bacon. The defectors supported prevailing wages, a key cause of construction unions, which lobbied strongly to keep the wages. All 195 voting Democrats backed Davis-Bacon, while 192 Republicans voted to kill Davis-Bacon, but lost.

The vote came on an amendment to the money bill for military construction, offered by right wing Rep. Steven King, R-Iowa, who has made a name for himself as one of the GOP’s outstanding haters of workers and unions.

King, also a Tea Party favorite and a contend-

er for the seat of Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, who is retiring next year, tried the same tactic last year, unsuccessfully.

Led by the GOP, Congress enacted Davis-Bacon in the depths of the Great Depression to prevent cut-rate contractors from winning bids for government work by essentially low-balling their workers. It tells the Labor Department to measure locally prevailing wages - which are not necessarily union wages - and then require bidders for government construction contracts to guarantee paying their workers at those levels.

Congress did the right thing. Davis-Bacon must be preserved.

That said the Republican Party has proved itself once again to be vehemently against organized labor. Progress in expanding labor and union rights depends on defeating the the GOP majority in the House next year. Nothing can be more important.

Detroit remembers King's "I Have a Dream"

By John Rummel

In the summer of 1963 while working out of an office at Solidarity House, the national headquarters of the United Auto Workers Union, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. drafted his historic "I Have a Dream" speech.

However, on June 23, two months before delivering his speech in Washington, Dr. King gave a trial run of that speech in Detroit to over 100,000 people who participated in what is known as "The Walk to Freedom."

The fiftieth anniversary of that "walk" will be commemorated on June 22 as tens of thousands again prepare to march down Woodward Ave, Detroit's main thoroughfare.

At a press conference yesterday at Solidarity House announcing the march, the Rev. Dr. Wendell Anthony, president of the Detroit NAACP, said he is sometimes asked, "Why march?"

"Quite simply many things need to change. We need a better Detroit, better Michigan, better jobs, and better justice, to turn the dream of 1963 into the reality of 2013."

He emphasized that while important victories have been won there is enough pain in the city and the state for anyone who has a concern to show up. He cited the passage of right-to-work (for less) and the imposition of emergency managers forcing over one-half of the state's African American population to live under "one man rule" as two issues causing significant hurt in the state.



the NAACP's national president, Ben Jealous, to the civil rights leader, Rev. Dr. C.T. Vivian, will be present.

On Friday, the day before the march, national and local experts will gather to discuss strategies and solutions to many of the evils that plague our communities including racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, jobs, and homophobia.

As in 1963, labor will play a special role. Miguel Foster, the UAW's director of civil rights, said the union is, as it was in 1963, in the thick of organizing for the coming march. Walter Rutherford, president of the UAW in 1963, walked hand in hand with Dr. King in the historic March on Washington.

Several who marched in 1963 spoke at the press conference.

When asked how many people were expected to participate, Anthony of the NAACP, said, "I want everybody" and he urged all faiths, races, genders and sexual orientations to come with their concerns.

Detroit will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the "Freedom Walk."

“Nuns on the Bus” tour for immigration reform

By Jim Lane

Promptly at 3 p.m., the big bus rolled into the parking lot at Catholic Charities in Dallas. One hundred people were there to greet them. These women, “Nuns on the Bus,” travel the continent on behalf of justice. It is hard to choose a word to describe the breathtaking interaction between the crowd and the travelers. One could say “enthusiastic,” or “excited,” or even “deeply moved.” But none of those words really captures the mood. The only word that fits is love.

Sister Simone Campbell, leader of the expedition, greeted everyone together and many people individually. Sister Campbell’s speech to the crowd and the four television cameras was a practical one. She said, “This is a nation that fixes problems.” She talked about the broken immigration system we suffer from today and how easily it can be fixed. She brought up the names of Texas’ two senators, John Cornyn and Ted Cruz, and asked the crowd to stop hissing and booing because they are going to have to talk to those senators even though these men “think it’s better to be a roadblock than to be for progress.”

Campbell was upbeat on the possibility of meaningful immigration reform. She noted that Democrats and Republicans agreed that it is necessary. She noted that the AFL-CIO and the Chamber of Commerce had agreed on it.

Las trabajadoras del hogar también cuentan

Por La Confederación Sindical Internacional (CSI)

La CSI y ONU Mujeres unen sus fuerzas para presentar una nueva publicación: “Las trabajadoras del hogar también cuentan: aplicar protecciones para los trabajadores del hogar”.

La presentación oficial, copatrocinada por ONU Mujeres, la CSI y el Gobierno de Filipinas, tendrá lugar en un evento paralelo durante el 57º período de sesiones de la Comisión sobre la Condición Jurídica y Social de la Mujer de las Naciones Unidas, en Nueva York, que lleva por tema: “Las trabajadoras del hogar también cuentan: asegurar la protección, respetar los derechos”.

En base a testimonios personales de Bolivia, el Estado de Nueva York en EE.UU., Filipinas y Sudáfrica, la carpeta informativa de la CSI y ONU Mujeres pretende incitar a todos los gobiernos a tomar medidas para asegurarse de que los trabajadores/as del hogar estén reconocidos y protegidos por la ley. Los trabajadores y trabajadoras del hogar representan parte integral de la fuerza laboral en el mundo entero y su participación podría aumentar aún más en los próximos años. Actualmente constituyen ya entre el 4-10% y el 1-2,5% de la mano de obra total en los países en desarrollo e industrializados, respectivamente. El 83% de estos trabajadores son mujeres. Millones son migrantes que dejan atrás a sus propios hijos para hacerse cargo de los hijos de otras personas. Sin embargo, en el 40% de los países del mundo no cuen-

tan con ningún tipo de protección.

Apoyándose en los prometedores avances en cuanto al marco normativo internacional y las prácticas nacionales que plasman estas normas de derechos humanos en muchos países, la carpeta informativa explica cómo las protecciones legales no sólo benefician a los trabajadores del hogar sino al conjunto de la sociedad. “ONU Mujeres se compromete a colaborar aún más estrechamente con sus asociados clave para garantizar la protección legal y social a las trabajadoras del hogar”, afirmó Michelle Bachelet, Directora Ejecutiva de ONU Mujeres. “El derecho de los trabajadores y trabajadoras del hogar a ser reconocidos y protegidos por la ley es un derecho humano fundamental. Debemos reconocer que los trabajadores y trabajadoras del hogar realizan una importante contribución a la sociedad, que nos beneficia a todos”.

Pero la carpeta no se limita a aportar argumentos para la protección legal. Demuestra que las normas pueden ser aplicadas y mejoradas en todos los países. “Los trabajadores y trabajadoras del hogar se merecen un trabajo decente, igual que cualquier otro trabajador. Nuestra campaña ‘12 para 12’ pretende establecer un movimiento global de trabajadores/as del hogar reclamando justicia para esta categoría de trabajadores olvidada. Exhortamos a todos los gobiernos a ampliar la legislación laboral para cubrir también este sector”, manifiesta Sharan Burrow, Secretaria General de la CSI.

NATIONAL CONTACT

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