

PEOPLE'S WORLD

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Citizens United anniversary met with nationwide protest

By John Bachtell

The U.S. Supreme Court's Citizens United ruling pounded the last nail in the coffin of democracy, and we're here to get our democracy back," declared Steve Alesch at a rally in Chicago. "The first thing we have to do is get corporations out of elections."

Alesch was one of 100 demonstrators here who braved the bitter cold on the second anniversary of the ruling declaring "corporations are people" and allowing corporations to spend unlimited and unregulated sums of money in political campaigns.

Protesters in San Francisco organized by Occupy Wall St. West and Move to Amend started the day by blocking five entrances of the Wells Fargo headquarters building in the financial district. Police and firefighters soon arrived to cut bolts and chains with which nearly 70 activists had bound themselves together. At least seven were arrested. Later in the morning, a nearby intersection was reported blocked with a banner.

Other morning actions in San Francisco targeted Bank of America branches, Citicorp was "evicted" from the financial district, and in another part of downtown, a "foreclosure house party" was in progress. Meanwhile, activists stood in Bechtel Corp.'s lobby to read a list of charges against the corporation, and a "squid fry" was in

progress at Goldman Sachs offices.

From Bangor, Maine, to Honolulu, more than 100 actions were held Jan. 20 at federal courthouses, banks and other financial institutions in cities throughout the country. The actions are being organized by groups and coalitions including Move to Amend.

The destructiveness of the Supreme Court ruling to the election process has been clearly demonstrated. Hundreds of millions of dollars of unregulated money was spent in the 2010 election cycle spreading lies.



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Already Super PACs linked to candidates Mitt Romney, Newt Gingrich, Rick Santorum and Ron Paul have spent a total of \$20 million in the three

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Republican presidential primaries.

American Crossroads, the far-right group run by Karl Rove, has pledged to spend at least \$240 million in the 2012 elections. The extreme right-wing billionaire Koch brothers and other Wall Street corporations will spend hundreds of millions more.

Move to Amend is promoting a constitutional amendment "to firmly establish that money is not speech, and that human beings, not corporations, are persons entitled to constitutional rights."

So far city councils in New York; Los Angeles; Boulder, Colo.; Albany, N.Y.; Oakland, Calif., and Madison, Wis., have passed resolutions in support. Efforts are moving forward to get resolutions on state ballots in time for the 2012 elections.

The advocacy group Common Cause is leading a campaign targeting three states - Colorado, Massachusetts and Montana - for state ballot initiatives. It is organizing to "pass advisory initiatives or referendums condemning the decision in as many states as possible, slowly creating a groundswell for a constitutional amendment that would make it clear corporations are not people and that Congress has the authority to limit cam-

paign spending."

Recently, the Montana Supreme Court directly challenged the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling, declaring it didn't apply to Montana state elections.

Free Speech for People, which filed an amicus brief in the Montana case, is leading a coalition that includes the American Sustainable Business Council, a network of 100,000 small to medium sized businesses, and the American Independent Business Alliance.

Efforts to amend are being taken up in Congress with resolutions sponsored by Reps. Donna Edwards, D-Md., Keith Ellison, D-Minn., and Walter Jones, R-N.C., and by Sens. Tom Udall, D-N.M., and Bernie Sanders, I-Vt.

Meanwhile a fight has also begun to force the Super PACs to reveal their sources. The Committee on Disclosure of Corporate Political Spending submitted a petition to the Securities and Exchange Commission to require corporations to come clean on their political contributions. It is supported by a wide array of political reform organizations, labor and elected officials.



John Bachtell chairs the Illinois PW bureau.

Scaling the Great Class Wall in America

By PW Editorial Board

Recent opinion polls make no bones about it: a Great Class Wall divides America.

A full 66 percent mark the conflict between the rich and the rest of the country as "very strong" according to a new Pew poll.

The number of Americans with this perception jumped almost 20 percent since 2009.

Awareness of this "very strong" class divide spans the political spectrum with 73 percent of Democrats and even a majority (53 percent) of Republicans expressing this view.

Among young people, African Americans, Latinos and working-class whites generally this class conscious sentiment is at its highest.

The U.S., it turns out, has the lowest class mobility of any industrialized capitalist country - far behind Canada, Denmark and Britain.

In the U.S., "42 percent of American men raised in the bottom fifth of incomes stay there as adults" says the Times. According to the Times report, "About 36 percent of Americans raised in the middle fifth move up as adults, while 23 percent stay on the same rung and 41 percent move down."

Behind these numbers, of course, is the cruel fact that remaining at the bottom of the economic

ladder are millions of minorities and women.

The data reflecting the most recent crisis is not yet out - most of the people studied were born before 1970 - so these figures for the black, brown, female and working-class poor are sure to worsen.

But the political and even ideological impact of these statistics is already being felt.

In polls about socialism Pew says, "Low-income Americans are twice as likely as higher-income Americans to offer a positive assessment of socialism (43 percent among those with incomes under \$30,000, 22 percent among those earning \$75,000 or more). Fifty-five percent of African Americans view socialism positively along with 44 percent of Latinos. A majority of young people between 18 and 29 (49 percent to 43 percent) do so as well.

A radicalization process is at work here and it is growing in intensity and breadth. It has its eye on scaling the Great Class Wall.

And let no one mistake it: it has its feet on the ground. And with its vision set on a better, more equal, more democratic, more humane, and yes more socialist America, it may soon become a movement and take flight. And when it does: watch out - it'll be a game-changer.

The U.S., it turns out, has the lowest class mobility of any industrialized capitalist country.

Labor maps legislative battle for 2012

By Mark Gruenberg

Organized labor will push several top legislative measures in the second session of the 112th Congress, but the outlook for most of them is uncertain, AFL-CIO Legislative Director Bill Samuel says.

In a Jan. 17 interview with Press Associates Union News Service, Samuel said the list includes fighting for a two-year transportation (highway-mass transit) funding bill, pushing for final resolution of a long-running war over airport construction and airways modernization - and union rights for airline workers - and extension of jobless benefits.

But the outlook is cloudy for all. Even the jobless benefits bill, which both parties agree upon, is hung up by a partisan dispute over how to pay for the \$150 billion measure.

Congress returned to town Jan. 17 to start this year's session, after a first year characterized by Senate GOP filibusters on just about everything and by a tea party-dominated House GOP attacking spending and workers.

Samuel expects those attacks to continue. He forecasts congressional Republicans will use the Congressional Review Act - a Gingrich-era GOP law - to try to overturn new federal rules streamlining union recognition election procedures.

The big fights will be over job creation. Samuel expects the Obama administration to again support the infrastructure bill, jobless benefits, and other measures, though he concedes that aid to state and local governments may be iffy. Obama will outline his agenda in the Jan. 24 State of the Union address.

Labor may have, finally, won one battle with the House GOP, Samuel said, over recognition elections for airline and railroad workers. "The Chamber of Commerce has finally dropped its opposition" to new rules for those elections, contained in the airport construction and modernization bill. That legislation would create 80,000-100,000 jobs.



As for extending jobless benefits, "we and the Democrats are hopeful" that Congress will OK an extension before the benefits expire Feb. 29, Samuel said.

If the GOP holds fast to its no-taxes-on-millionaires stand and the Democrats protect major programs, there could be a stalemate on jobless benefits, Samuel concedes. "But the Republicans badly miscalculated" when the last benefits extension was debated in December that their no-taxes stand was a winner. Instead, they got a political black eye for protecting the rich at the expense of unemployed workers.

The two-year highway-mass transit bill, worth \$106 billion plus inflation, still needs some details: Its mass transit sections are incomplete and so is its financing, outside of the federal gasoline tax. The measure would create tens of thousands of construction jobs and its passage is a major goal of building trades unions.

Once Senate panels finish drafting the measure, the Democratic-run Senate is expected to approve it, Samuel said. The problem is the GOP-run House, again.

Obama's spokesman has already said the jobless benefits extension will be the administration's top legislative priority this year, and it will let other things go, though Samuel expects support for other job-creating legislation.

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Ohio says no to new fracking permits

By Joe Sims

A victory was scored in the fight against hydraulic fracking in Ohio when the state Department of Natural Resources announced a suspension of new drilling permits.

Fracking is the process used for the extraction of natural gas deep underground. Several earthquakes have been attributed to wells built on or near fault lines in Youngstown, Ohio. A 4.0 earthquake occurred in Youngstown on New Year's Eve.

The department says it is working on a study of the issue and will not issue new permits until that study is completed. The report is due to be released at the beginning of February.

Republican Gov. John Kasich's office confirmed injection wells, which accept brine, a salty, chemical byproduct of natural gas and oil fracking, will not be allowed to exceed 8,000 feet in depth. ODNR said injection wells can no longer be drilled into the bedrock, formation, where injection wells could trigger seismic activity.

Ohio voters are in favor of a moratorium on drilling until impact studies are completed according to a new poll.

Public opinion, however, has not been won over on fracking's claimed economic benefit, according to the poll: "The economic benefits of drilling for natural gas outweigh environmental concerns, Ohio voters say 64-29 percent. Voters say 85-11 percent that drilling will create jobs in Ohio.

Youngstown, the site of the worse quake in the state, has the highest concentration of poverty in the country.

Because of the fracking controversy Kasich is expected to deliver his State of the State speech in Steubenville, located south-east of Youngstown. Plans are being made to protest his support of fracking and refusal to call state hearings on drilling.

ONU exige a EE.UU. cierre de cárcel de Guantánamo

Por Prensa Latina

Naciones Unidas criticó hoy a Estados Unidos por mantener abierta la cárcel ilegal de Guantánamo y no procesar a los responsables de violaciones de los derechos humanos, incluida la tortura, en esa instalación.

La Alta Comisionada de la ONU para los Derechos Humanos, Navi Pillay, expresó profunda decepción por el incumplimiento de la promesa hecha por el gobierno norteamericano de cerrar esa prisión y, por el contrario, recrudescer el sistema de detención arbitraria.

Asimismo recordó que hace tres años el presidente estadounidense, Barack Obama, ordenó la clausura de esa cárcel creada en la base de Guantánamo, en territorio cubano ocupado por Estados Unidos.

En un comunicado emitido en Ginebra y distribuido en la sede de la ONU en Nueva York, Pillay advirtió que esa instalación continúa funcionando y mantiene a personas detenidas de manera arbitraria y por tiempo indefinido, en clara violación de la ley internacional.

Para empeorar las cosas, en diciembre pasado fue firmada una ley (National Defense Authorization Act) que codifica la detención indefinida sin cargos ni juicio, apuntó la comisiónada.

Se trata de una legislación que contraviene algunos de los principios fundamentales de la justicia y los derechos humanos, en particular en lo relacionado con el juicio justo y el rechazo a la detención arbitraria, agregó.

Pillay reafirmó a las autoridades de Estados Unidos su obligación de garantizar que los individuos priva-

dos de su libertad sean procesados por la justicia o liberados.

También demandó que todas las alegadas violaciones de esos derechos ocurridas en la prisión de Guantánamo, incluidos los casos de tortura, deben ser investigadas.

La funcionaria subrayó que los responsables del desarrollo, aprobación y puesta en práctica de métodos coercitivos de interrogatorio análogos a la tortura deben rendir cuentas.

También quienes hayan perpetrado, ordenado, tolerado o consentido actos de tortura y malos tratamientos contra los detenidos.

Pillay instó al Congreso norteamericano a propiciar el cierre del centro de detención de Guantánamo.

Otras noticias: Encuentran forma de crear paneles solares más eficientes:

Investigadores encontraron la forma de crear paneles solares más eficientes, inspirados en modelos de la naturaleza, publicó hoy la revista Solar Energy.

Las pequeñísimas flores internas de un girasol se encuentran inclinadas respecto a su vecina en un ángulo de 137 grados, lo que también se denomina ángulo dorado.

En los paneles solares, una distribución similar ahorraría un 16 por ciento más de espacio en comparación con los que existen en la actualidad, lo que reduciría la cantidad de tierra utilizada y también los costos, indicaron investigadores del MIT.

En la actualidad los cristales de los paneles solares son distribuidos en semicírculos concéntricos, un patrón que no es totalmente óptimo porque en determinados momentos del día algunos espejos hacen sombra sobre otros, sostienen los investigadores.