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Ohio celebrates: Union-busting bill defeated in landslide

By Rick Nagin

Labor and community activists throughout Ohio jubilantly celebrated the massive defeat of Issue 2 and repeal of the draconian union-busting SB 5 that would have stripped collective bargaining rights from 360,000 public employees.

Some 500 packed into the Hopkins Sheraton Conference Center here last night, cheering speakers, chanting slogans, hugging, kissing, back-slapping as it became clear that Issue 2 had not only lost but by a landslide 61%.

Chomping chicken wings and enjoying drinks, teachers, firefighters, painters, teamsters, public officials and community activists celebrated the unity and power of the giant coalition of unions and their allies that emerged when SB 5 was introduced in the Republican-controlled state legislature last February.

"O-H-I-O, SB 5 has got to go," the crowd chanted, led by retired Cleveland school teacher Hazel Hicks. Hicks was among the tens of thousands who rallied and filled the Statehouse during hearings and voting on SB 5. She proudly recalled being part of her union's brigade, which collected 25,000 signatures outside Cleveland Indians games to put the issue on the ballot after the measure passed and was signed into law by Republican Gov. John Kasich last March.

Statewide, 10,000 volunteers collected an unprecedented 1.3 million signatures to get the issue



on the ballot. That number was greater than Tuesday's Yes vote for Issue 2 and was the lion's share of the more than 2 million votes cast to defeat the measure.

Cleveland Firefighters President Tom Lally was cheered as he described his union's role in the massive relentless door to door canvassing, phoning and dramatic actions including the "firefighters' tailgate party" that reached 60,000 fans at a recent Cleveland Browns game. The firefighters became poster children of the fight everywhere, including rural strongholds.

Reflecting a serious problem for the GOP, Steve "Big Loom" Loomis, the towering president

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of the Cleveland Police Patrolmen's Association, said that because of SB 5, the Republicans had lost his long-time allegiance and that of many others

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in the safety forces.

State Rep. Bill Patmon said he hoped his party would now have more clout in the state government.

SB 5 was Gov. Kasich's signature legislation. He promised it would break labor's political power and let local governments compensate for cuts in state funding.

"Get on my bus or we will run you over," he proclaimed after being narrowly elected last year. But the No votes on Issue 2 actually exceeded the votes he received in 2010 and now he sang a different tune, claiming he would have "to take a deep breath and to spend some time to reflect on what happened here."

"This victory has national implications," Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, told the cheering crowd in Cleveland. It was, as was widely acknowledged, a huge defeat for right-wing extremism and seen as a trial run for the 2012 presidential election.

It was a setback for the billionaire Koch broth-

ers, whose American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) had provided the template for SB 5 and whose Americans for Prosperity had succeeded in adding the most anti-labor provisions to the law after it first passed in the state Senate.

In fact, dirty tricks were used extensively by supporters of Issue 2. On Election Day robocalls went out from a mysterious "American Futures Fund" telling opponents to be sure to "vote tomorrow."

But dirty tricks, deceitful advertising and corporate funds could not overcome the unprecedented unity, clarity and mobilization of labor and its allies.

"This is just the beginning," said Stuart Garson, chairman of the Cuyahoga Democratic Party. "This showed us what they are capable of and we showed them what we can do. We got to keep this coalition together. United we stand!"



Rick Nagin writes for the People's World.

Labor, community thwart GOP agenda

By PW Editorial Board

Ohio. Mississippi. Maine. Arizona. Iowa. New Jersey. These are states where voters clobbered the Republican/corporate power-grab and extremist policies on Election Day, Nov. 8. These victories show that the power of coalitions, especially labor-community coalitions, can overcome right-wing extremism and cold corporate cash.

They also show that the American people, when mobilized, reject the far-right agenda.

In Ohio, after Republican Gov. John Kasich narrowly won the 2010 election, he and his cohorts pushed through a draconian law that stripped collective bargaining rights from firefighters, police, teachers, nurses and other public workers. That meant the people who actually save and improve the lives of Ohioans didn't have a say, for example, in how many firefighters are needed for a call, or what equipment they need in order to do their job.

The labor movement didn't take this assault lying down. They rolled up their sleeves and built a coalition with communities across the state to expose and explain this.

And that made all the difference. The law was repealed by an astounding 61% of the voters!

In Mississippi, voters resoundingly defeated, by 58%, a state constitutional amendment that

would have said legal personhood begins the moment an egg is fertilized by a sperm.

In Maine, voters repealed the Republican law that took away Election Day registration. In a historic vote in Arizona, a coalition of immigrant advocates, business leaders, Latinos, Mormons and union members recalled state Senate President Russell Pearce, the architect of Arizona's notorious SB 1070 anti-immigrant law. In Iowa, voters rejected GOP candidates backed by anti-gay hate groups targeting a takeover of the state Senate. The results ensured a pro-marriage-equality majority.

And in New Jersey, voters kept the state's Democratic majorities - and even gained one seat - in the legislature, despite massive campaigning by Republican Gov. Chris Christie. Anger over the Republican playbook attack on workers was a factor in preserving the Democratic majorities, who pledge to fight the governor's agenda.

Behind each victory for the 99% was a broad and united coalition and an active grassroots campaign. That's the lesson for 2012. To rout the GOP/corporate 1% cabal, it's going to take this kind of 99%, people-powered political action and more.

The labor and people's movements showed the way in Ohio, the heart of it all.

The labor movement didn't take this assault lying down.

College football profits protected at children's expense

By Pepe Lozano

There is no escaping the charges Joe Paterno, his staff and his superiors including the entire Penn State University Board of Trustees should face for their systemic lack of action relating to allegations of boys being sexually abused at the school dating back to 2002.

Paterno, 84, was fired Wednesday night, Nov. 9, after reports surfaced that he did not alert police after a graduate student approached him in 2002 with an eyewitness account of sexual abuse. The grad student told Paterno he saw Paterno's assistant coach Jerry Sandusky engaging in inappropriate behavior with a 10-year-old boy in a school shower. The grand jury summation describes how Sandusky was caught raping the young boy.

Paterno had announced he would retire after finishing the season. But the school Board of Trustees announced his dismissal, effective immediately.

Sandusky, 67, who coached the football team for 23 years under Paterno, was arrested and is being charged with 40 sex crimes against at least eight boys from 1994 to 2005. All of the minors were under the care of Sandusky's charity for impoverished youth called "The Second Mile Foundation," which he founded in 1977. Sandusky had access to hundreds of boys. He denies all the charges.

According to the grand jury report, Paterno reported the 2002 account to his immediate superior, Athletic Director Tim Curley. Curley and another administrator, senior vice president for business and finance Gary Schultz, were charged with perjury and obstruction and have also been removed from their jobs. Paterno however, has not been charged for any wrongdoing.

In his resignation statement Paterno called the scandal a tragedy. "It is one of the great sorrows of my life," he said.



But critics are outraged that Paterno and the others didn't do more. "It could have been stopped, but it wasn't because the image of Joe Paterno Nittany Lion Football was deemed more important than the children at risk," writes sports columnist Dave Zirin.

Zirin notes those responsible for covering up the sex abuse scandal are guilty of protecting a program before a child. "It's connected to the Bowl Championship Series, 'conference realignment' and all the ways in which college football has morphed over the last generation into a multi-billion dollar big business.

Zirin points out the football team regularly draws 100,000 fans to the college town and produces \$50 million in pure profit for the university. He sights a report, which says every Penn State game pumps \$59 million into the local economy.

Ironically after Paterno was fired thousands of Penn State students rioted. Many of them chanted, "We want Joe! We want Joe!" Some threw rocks and bottles.

Facebook user Arianna wrote, "The more I read/learn about Sandusky at Penn State, the more I feel sick to my stomach."

All of the minors were under the care of Sandusky's charity for impoverished youth.

NYC demands millionaire tax extension

By Gabe Falsetta

More than 200 mothers, fathers and their children from New York City schools marched to New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's office to tell the governor that his position on the millionaires' tax, which will expire this year without legislative action, is unacceptable.

The Democratic leader of the New York State Assembly, Sheldon Silver, and a majority of New Yorkers, favor the tax.

The governor has cut almost \$2 billion from the school budget this year, resulting in overcrowded classrooms and shortages of teacher assistants. Recently, more than 640 school support staff were laid off.

President Santos Crespo of AFSCME District Council 37 Local 372, which represents support staff, came with union members to support the parents and teachers.

At a recent City Hall press conference, Santos declared, "We made proposals that would have closed the budget deficit, but the Department of Education refused to negotiate in good faith."

According to figures from the New York Alliance for Quality Education, estimated revenue lost next fiscal year if the millionaires tax sunsets would be \$2.8 billion; the budget gap for next fiscal year in New York State is. \$2.4 billion.

Since 2007, New York City schools have had their budgets cut by almost 14 percent. These cuts simply translate to 7,000 classrooms with more children than the contractual limit (which is already high - 32 students in grades one through six). Now there are than 1,000 more overcrowded classrooms than last year.

Retired professor Mary Lee Berringer said, "When I was six years old my mother took me to marches at Union Square on the Spanish Civil War. Now my grandchildren are here for a good cause."

Los Indignados: acogiendo lo nuevo, creando un movimiento

Por Sam Webb

Este es un momento volátil. La batalla entre clases está intensificando y el resultado aún debe ser decidido.

Este es el marco de la curva ascendente en la batalla entre clases. Hace mucho tiempo que las cosas no son tan desequilibradas.

Acciones en masa duraderas y que no son violentas, desobediencia civil, nuevos niveles de solidaridad y conciencia, nuevas y creativas formas de organización, tácticas y eslóganes, y una variedad de fuerzas y organizaciones están llenando el cuadro político de maneras novedosas.

La ocupación de Wall Street es la expresión más dramática de una lucha ágil. Sus políticas no se ajustan nítidamente en ninguna categoría política y sus métodos de organización no son ortodoxos. Ningún "ismo" prevalece. Sin embargo, la mayoría de los participantes están el lado progresivo y de izquierda aunque ellos mismos no se caractericen en esos términos.

Este movimiento está en sus etapas iniciales y congrega a personas con diversas opiniones políticas. Estas acciones han traído a luz a Wall Street y han, consecuentemente, cambiado el dialogo nacional y lejos de la ultra derecha y las conversas anti-gubernamentales. Esto ha cambiado la lucha contra el capital financiero de un asunto de la izquierda hacia un asunto amplio de arriba-abajo.

Las ocupaciones pueden parecer que han "salido de la nada", pero eso no es el caso. Desde la primavera hemos presenciado un aumento de luchas de clase y democráticas en una escala global desde Cairo a Atenas.

Y muchos activistas se arrojaron a la campaña para elegir a Barack Obama y están buscando maneras de

dejar su marca en la política.

Consecuentemente, el movimiento de ocupación toma su inspiración y está arraigado en luchas domésticas e internacionales.

La mayoría de sus miembros es compuesta de gente joven.

Los jóvenes no solo quieren limitar el poder de los bancos y democratizar nuestras políticas, pero también quieren transformar sus vidas.

El potencial de la creación de un movimiento de jóvenes nunca ha sido tan grande. Este ensombrecería las rebeliones de los jóvenes en los 1960s. Y como bien sabemos, este movimiento dejó una marca definitiva en la política y cultura de nuestro país.

Un desafío inmediato es el energizar e involucrar al resto de esta generación.

Lo que los jóvenes hagan depende de muchos factores, incluyendo si es que el movimiento, ampliamente dicho, les otorgue apoyo y un palco para que puedan expresar sus preocupaciones específicas, y que puedan construir sus propias formas.

Obviamente, el movimiento de Ocupación enfrenta desafíos. De alguna forma, el menor de estos es el de vocear una serie de demandas. La gran amenaza es el cómo expandir el movimiento, especialmente entre los jóvenes; como arraigar y solidificar relaciones con poderes claves, especialmente los sindicatos.

Tanto como participantes de Ocupación y como activistas en movimientos de justicia social debemos prestar atención a estos desafíos de una manera constructiva. Esto incluye una respuesta vigorosa de las comunidades progresivas y democráticas hacia iniciativas del gobierno para desalojar a los ocupantes.