

To Biden and Harris: Don't keep your best policies packed away



By John Wojcik

The Biden-Harris campaign is doing a good job of presenting a small-d democratic alternative to the neo-fascist Trump and his followers in and around the White House and Republican Party.

The good job the Dems are doing in this respect was reflected in the Trump-Biden and the Pence-Harris debates.

Both Biden and Harris, however, missed an opportunity to present in a clear way one of the most important alternatives the Democrats have to Trump's disastrous pandemic and economic policies.

When asked to describe how they would deal with the pandemic, they talked about following the science, encouraging masking and social distancing, and promoting the role of trustworthy doctors, researchers, and scientists. What they did not talk about, however, was the multi-trillion-dollar rescue package already passed by the Democratic-controlled House.

Millions are hurting because the \$600 unemployment payments that are a big part of the HEROES package have stopped. People are hungry because this lifeline has been cut. People are losing their homes because this lifeline has been cut. Many already lost their health care when they lost their jobs, and now without the \$600, they're struggling to even stay fed and housed.

Winter is coming. Without adequate food, clothing, and shelter, many more people will get sick and die because of the combined threats of the coronavirus, the seasonal flu, the cold weather, hunger, homelessness, and stress.

The Trump-McConnell conspiracy to kill the Heroes Act, stopping the funds desperately needed by the unemployed, should be something Biden and Harris talk about in every single debate or campaign event; they should be bringing it up every time they

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discuss the coronavirus.

It is true that Biden has on his website a detailed and progressive program addressing a broad array of issues.

Having a strong platform on a website is one thing but putting that platform forward and clearly

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explaining it to masses of people is another. The slashing of funds for the unemployed in the biggest jobs crisis since the Great Depression and in the middle of a pandemic is something Biden and Harris should never stop discussing.

Harris did not mention the \$600 even when Pence wrongly said the Democratic platform on the coronavirus was nothing but a copy of what his administration was already doing.

The truth, of course, is that the Republican solution to the coronavirus pandemic offers nothing for the many millions desperate to put food on their tables and keep a roof over their heads. This truth, along with the Democratic alternative, the \$600 jobless benefits and the rest of the Heroes Act, should be put forward by the Democratic candidates for the White House every chance they get.

While the Democratic candidates are light years ahead of Trump and Pence, they must not hold back on using their progressive platform to build the massive turnout that's needed to defeat Trump.

They must fight the battle on their terms, not on the terms set by their Republican opponents.

When the Republicans make outlandish claims that Biden is manipulated by communists and socialists, Biden must hit back by talking about the countless dictators and right-wing strongmen Trump is in league with, always to the detriment of working people at home and abroad.

When Pence talks about Democratic opposition to fracking in order to appeal to property owners who earn money by leasing their land to frackers, Harris must talk about how the environmental policies of the Trump administration leave people with air they can't breathe and water they can't drink.

When the Democrats have something as powerful as passage of the Heroes Act and aid to the jobless under their belts, they must not be afraid to boast about it and put it forward. It's the way to win people.

Failure to do so is taking a chance that we see a repeat of the tragedy of 2016 on Election Day 2020.

Mass strikes against 'catastrophic' assault on workers' rights and environment

By Ben Chacko

Millions took strike action in Indonesia Wednesday and thousands rallied in cities across the country in protest at a new Job Creation Law that takes an axe to workers' rights and environmental protections.

In Bandung, West Java, protesters blocked roads around the local parliament building and burned tires. Industrial workers rallied in Tangerang and Bekasi and walked out of factories and demonstrated in Karawang and Serang in West Java and Banten provinces.

Police prevented trade unions from rallying in the capital Jakarta.

The Confederation of Indonesian Trade Unions (KSPI) said that two million workers from 32 unions were taking three days of strike action against the measure.

The Job Creation Law has been slammed as "catastrophic" by Amnesty International, while the International Trade Union Confederation says it will "destabilize lives and ruin livelihoods so that foreign corporations can extract wealth from the country." The Building and Woodworkers International protested at the law, saying it puts "the

interests and demands of foreign investors ahead of workers, communities, and the environment."

It replaces 79 separate laws, reducing workers' holiday entitlement and severance pay, allowing indefinite retention of workers on temporary contracts, and removes the requirement for environmental assessments of business projects, a measure likely to accelerate deforestation.

Indonesia is the leading producer of palm oil, and the palm plantations recently excoriated for widespread abuse of child and slave labor in a probe by the Associated Press—have swallowed up vast areas of forest, driving rare animals like the orangutan and Sumatran rhino towards extinction.

The law also makes it easier for employers to import foreign labor, despite exposure of the abuse of migrant workers on the palm plantations.

The ITUC called on President Joko Widodo to revoke the law and negotiate any changes to workers' rights with trade unions. Widodo acknowledged that the law is deeply unpopular, but said he was free to pass it as he was "no longer constrained by politics" as he doesn't intend to stand for re-election.

The omnibus bill replaces 79 separate laws, reducing workers' holidays and severance, allowing companies to keep workers on temporary contracts, and removing the requirement for environmental assessments of business project.

Federal workers' unions slam racist Trump order to end diversity training



By PAI

The two largest unions for federal workers, the Government Employees (AFGE) and the Treasury Employees (NTEU) are slamming GOP Oval Office occupant Donald Trump's order dismantling government-wide diversity education programs.

NTEU President Tony Reardon and AFGE President Everett Kelley—who is Black—bluntly said Trump's ban is racist.

"Trump's order to prohibit the use of federal funds for diversity and inclusion training programs for federal and contract workers has sent a terrible message that racism and discrimination are not problems the federal government should address," Kelley said in a statement.

Trump found out about the programs in early October and blew up. Combining his hatred of federal worker unions with an appeal to the white nationalists in his electoral base, on Oct. 9, he ordered them abolished and workers disciplined for using them.

Kelley called the whole sequence "blatantly political." He said, in so many words, that if the government won't educate federal workers about diversity in an increasingly multi-racial society, his union will keep doing so, led by its own department.

"That the White House has responded to recent protests on issues of racial justice by banning federal agencies' attempt to foster tolerance and mutual respect through education is extremely disappointing. But our union will continue to fill the void and carry

our efforts to make sure the federal government adheres to the law and keeps federal workplaces free from bigotry and discrimination," he pledged.

Reardon took a similar tack in a column in *Government Executive*, a non-partisan publication on federal, state, and local issues—minus the union-run anti-racism training.

"Trump recently ordered a massive government wide investigation to root out programs in which federal employees learn about and guard against systemic racism. Just consider how preposterous that sounds," he said.

"Political appointees and senior managers are under orders to turn their agencies upside down in a frantic effort to review any training or professional education programs that mention diversity or inclusion in an effort to comply with the president's executive order."

"Employees are being threatened with disciplinary action for organizing such training that falls afoul of the president's directive to eliminate 'un-American propaganda.'"

"This is exactly the wrong direction we, as a federal workforce and as a nation, should be going... The federal government should be a leading example for facing systemic racism by building a workforce that appropriately reflects the diversity of the United States, paying employees fairly, ensuring they are treated with respect, and establishing work environments in which employees can safely call out discriminatory actions and practices," he added.

Labor leaders bluntly said Trump's order is racist.

Germany: Communists point to alarming ultra-right infiltration of police

By Emile Schepers

The German Communist Party is criticizing Interior Minister Horst Seehofer, of the right-wing Christian Democratic Union, for failing to take seriously information about the infiltration of police forces by fascist and ultra-right tendencies. Writing in the party newspaper *Unsere Zeit* (Our Times), Markus Bernhardt cites the scandalous finding that 20% of the police officers of North Rhine-Westphalia are firmly linked to right extremism.

Others have denounced the racist comments of police officers on extremist social media. German Communist Party leader Patrik Köbele calls these revelations “the tip of the iceberg.”

Corte federal exige a la EPA que haga cumplir los derechos civiles

Javier Sierra

Comunidades de todo el país aplauden una decisión de juez federal que requiere que la Agencia de Protección Ambiental (EPA) cumpla con la ley e investigue quejas de derechos civiles oportunamente.

La decisión surge de una demanda presentada en 2015 por grupos comunitarios contra la EPA por el rechazo de la agencia de investigar sus quejas de derechos civiles durante más de una década en violación de la ley federal.

La Jueza de Distrito Sandra Brown Armstrong además negó hoy el intento de la EPA de alterar el dictamen de la corte y retirar una orden que requiere específicamente que la agencia respete la ley de quejas de derechos civiles en el futuro.

La EPA es responsable de que los beneficiarios públicos y privados de su financiación cumplan con el Título VI de la Ley de Derechos Civiles de 1964, la cual prohíbe la discriminación basada en la raza, color o nacionalidad de origen. Las reglas de la EPA requieren que la agencia complete sus investigaciones sobre quejas de derechos civiles presentadas en virtud de Título VI en 180 días, pero una y otra vez, la EPA ha fracasado en completar investigaciones oportunamente, a veces por décadas, dejando a los grupos comunitarios al desamparo legal. Hoy la corte reafirmó que la EPA tiene que cumplir con la ley.

El Padre Phil Schmitter del Centro de Oración St. Francis, declaró, “La EPA tiene una larga historia de ignorar la aplicación de los derechos civiles”.

En 1992, el Centro de Oración St. Francis presentó una queja a la EPA alegando que el departamento ambiental de Michigan discriminó al aprobar un permiso para la Planta Térmica Genessee en el área de Flint, ciudad que ya tenía más de 200 instalaciones contaminadoras. La EPA aceptó investigar la queja, pero esta acumuló polvo durante décadas. En 2017, 25 años tras que el Centro de Oración St. Francis presentara su queja, la EPA finalmente emitió una resolución de discriminación.

“No fue hasta que fuimos a la corte, junto con otros grupos comunitarios cuyas quejas también fueron ignoradas, que la EPA actuó”, dijo el Padre Schmitter. “Mientras tanto, los residentes de Flint han vivido en la sombra de instalaciones contaminadoras. La EPA no exigió rendición de cuentas al estado por discriminación, y permitió a la agencia estatal insistir en esta apatía mucho más tiempo del que debió”.

“Si la EPA hubiera investigado la queja del Centro de Oración St. Francis oportunamente hace 20 años, podíamos haber visto mejoras en los procesos y políticas estatales que podían haber evitado más tragedias, como la crisis de agua potable de Flint”, dijo Suzanne Novak, abogada de Earthjustice. “Es por ello que el acceso a las cortes es crucial. Sin la rendición de cuentas a una corte, la EPA podría no haber actuado en absoluto”.