

Season's Greetings

AFL-CIO MILWAUKEE

LABOR PRESS

WWW.MILWAUKEELABOR.ORG

MILWAUKEE AREA LABOR COUNCIL, AFL-CIO

Vol. 69, No. 12

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

Thursday, December 17, 2009

(USPS 350-360)



Holiday Edition

- The gender push - Page 3
- The jobs push - Page 17
- The green push - Page 18
- The fair trade push - Page 4



US Census expects this logo to become familiar quickly

The 2010 countdown to counting us all

By Dominique Paul Noth, Labor Press Editor

Comprehensive, confidential and vital to representation in our democracy and the allocation of a staggering \$400 billion in federal funds, the 2010 US Census is upon us.

Media and public officials have already met to be educated and get to work. Volunteers are being hired at \$15 an hour to help federal officials and hired agencies provide telephone assistance and backtracking to support the nationwide US mailings to households that begin in March.

In October the city of Milwaukee held special sessions for the print and electronic media featuring US Census leaders from both D.C. and Chicago. It has also launched its own website, www.milwaukee.gov/2010census, to support the national effort and formed a community-wide Complete Count Committee led by Mayor Tom Barrett and Common Council President Willie Hines to assure the public of the confidentiality and importance of the mission.

Since these last October meetings, what has unfolded is a remarkably detailed campaign. It can't provide every answer the public has but can knock down myths and explain a detailed procedure and how it will be publicized.

The primary emphasis is absolute confidentiality of the information along with the importance of being thorough and detailed. The officials have doubly-emphasized this. "Our first goal is to remove barriers - and perceived barriers - that may keep an individual from

Census continued Page 6



Rage boiled in delegate Gerry Gunderson over the health system's role in the death of a friend while retired nurse Vivian DeBeck pleaded that anger just played into the hands of those opposing reform in a fascinating exploration of the need and pain behind the bills moving through Congress. For the full taste of the testimonials, see Pages 12-14.

Heeding the human cost

By Dominique Paul Noth
Labor Press Editor

The stories were gut-wrenching and heart-breaking - patients spurred into death by corporate denial of cancer treatment, physicians dealing with cardiac surgery when the patient had stopped insulin treatment for lack of money, bureaucrats who issued cold-blooded refusals without knowing their own Badger Care options, students forced out of school by illness and immediately dropped from family coverage, mothers choosing between basic food and life-saving drugs.

The particularly frightening truth is that these stories are typical, not invented. If anything they have become standard in the world's leading industrial nation that boasts that five out of six are



The testimonials were sadly familiar to panelists such as Rep. Sandy Pasch, but still touched the heart.

covered by employer supported health insurance - only to see how quickly that protection can vanish if they get sick.

These were not special cases dragged to the microphone at Serb Hall for a union forum Dec. 2. The expert panel was deeply moved, but it was by variations

of tales that had tortured them in a year of debate. "Everyone in the room can tell you about this," said one. Representatives of elected leaders said simply: "This is what we have been hearing every day for a year" - and ironically, the very people who oppose the Democrats' efforts to reform health care take the officials aside and relate similar horror stories.

"This is my daily nightmare," said Dr. Frederick DeBoe, a primary care physician with Aurora who recounted how just that morning in his office he had faced four cases similar to those he had just heard about at Serb Hall -- no money, no treatment options and no help in the system.

"I thought the writing was on the wall 27 years ago when I

Forum continued Page 15

Trades prep for hard winter

Reports, Commentary by Dominique Paul Noth

In the last fall of the Bush administration, leaders of the buildings and trades unions were warning that the blue skies of late 2007 and early 2008 were heading into a snowstorm of tight credit, fallow building and freeway construction, layoffs affecting all workers, runaway health costs and the inevitable results of years of spending on credit without saving or putting away for the future.

Of course they were right. The indifference to the fate of the American workers -- whose productivity had actually kept all these bad policies afloat -- was about to be exposed. So even a year ago, in spite of the euphoria of finally winning the White House, the brightest elves were already laying goodies away for a hard future.

By October of 2009, 10 months after something was finally done in D.C. to begin the slow painful process of reversal, construction jobs nationally had

fallen by 1.1 million from a year before.

In Wisconsin the figures are somewhat better - some 113,700 construction jobs in play this

October. If you only compare to one year ago, the numbers are only a few thousand lost, but that's misleading. Don't fool yourself. There are enough dark clouds without fudging with the white chocolate.

Lyle Balistreri, president of the Milwaukee Building & Construction Trades Council, AFL-CIO, flatly predicts that this will be the worst winter for construction work in his memory, and he goes back

Climbing Back Up

Page 9

Creating New Industries

Page 11

Fighting Myths

Page 10

Trades continued Page 8

Health tales riddled with insurance denials

Sample the views from the floor - either here or by visiting Wisconsin Eye, which covered the proceeding:

Kevin Her, executive director of the Hmong cultural Shee Yee Community, discussed how he survived a hunting accident only losing the hearing in one ear. But he thought that nothing next to ongoing worries about no family health care. He's only offered impossibly high deductibles since he works for a non-profit cause - and since his wife gave birth via a C-section, which is regarded as a pre-existing condition.

Now a Cardinal Stritch graduate student, Clarissa Barnes didn't ask for sympathy about her thousands of dollars in unexpected medical bills but her story reminded listeners of what could

Student Clarissa Barnes (below) and Kevin Her (at right) pointing to the ear he can no longer hear out of.



happen to them with employer-based family health insurance for their dependents. She had to drop out of school and consequently lose family health coverage when she became ill in her early 20s.

Theresa Skrzyński, in a



story emotionally told by long-time friend and OPEIU retiree Judy Burnick, worked for many years before being felled by Crohn's disease (a debilitating progressive attack on the gastrointestinal immune system). At which point, as Burnick's litany recounted, she was abandoned by private insurance, family coverage, government plans, even Social Security disability snafus that an administrative judge hadn't decided in four years.



Nursing assistant Mike Garver and panelist and primary care physician Frederick DeBoe daily confront inexplicable tragedies.

Meanwhile the illness required surgery, steroid prescriptions and her Badger Care was discontinued once her daughter moved out at age 18. Government advisers dismissed her concerns without explaining that because of surgery she could transition to another Badger Care option.

The hard choice between basic care, basic living, even death and life, is seen daily by



Mike Garver, a nursing assistant at St. Francis Hospital, but "while I work with this every day" it was really emphasized for him what others routinely go through when he learned the cost of his own gall bladder surgery -- \$38,000 for a simply procedure. "I had good insurance, but what would I have done without such coverage?" he wondered aloud.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING ENGINEERS LOCAL 139
 TERRANCE MCGOWAN Business Manager
 N72 W23233 Roundy Drive
 P.O. Box 130, Pewaukee, WI

Holiday Greetings
 From
Allied Printing Trades Council
ASK FOR THE LABEL!

Officers
 Jim Holtyn, President
 George Walls, Vice President
 Perry Kettner, Secretary-Treasurer
414-476-1577

Season's Greetings

From Our Members At
WTMJ, WITI,
WMVS/WMTV
and WISN

IBEW LOCAL 715

Merry Christmas

BOILERMAKERS & HELPERS CONSTRUCTION LOCAL 107
 Blane Tom, Business Manager
 and All Local 107 members

UAW

This Holiday Season, treat the ones you love to gifts that are Union Made In America.

Happy Holidays
 From President Anthony Rainey
 and the Executive Board of
 UAW Local 469
 Representing the Workers at
 Master Lock Company in Milwaukee

Local 469

Happy Holidays
 From
Plumbers Union
Local 75

Greetings!
COMMUNICATION WORKERS
Local 4603

George Walls - President
 Jim Courchane
 Clinton Rodgers
 Rich Pearson
 Chris Stapelfeldt
 Mike Kudlewski
 Carrie Murphy
 Keisha Hollis-Wilson
 Kim Ward
 Dave Stubbs
 Greg Proudlove
 Debora Carter

Happy Holidays

Laborer's Local 113

AFFILIATED WITH AFL-CIO

MILWAUKEE BUILDING TRADES COUNCIL

6310 W. Appleton Ave. 414-873-4520

Workers, friends well with rage, frustration

Several speakers shared emotional waves of frustration and even rage at the current health care system.

Gerry Gunderson, a Milwaukee Area Labor Council delegate, took the microphone for a moving tribute to a recently departed friend and activist, Skip Porter, and to rail against Skip's treatment leading up to his final illness, care denied early enough to make a difference - even though Skip and his family had nothing but good to say about his care at a union hospital, St. Francis.

But his disability coverage from his union work kept Badger Care from kicking in and then specialists hung up on him until Medicare coverage kicked in.

Would quick help have kept Skip alive today? No one knows for sure, but such slowness was criminal to his family, noted Gunderson.

That, Gunderson said, is the most obvious indictment of our social neglect, in this case dooming one of the community's most genuinely optimistic and caring citizens. *See his memorial on Page 16.*

Gunderson delivered a passionate criticism of the Democrats' bill in the Senate and another call for the single-payer system, which was taken off the table in early discussions.

Yet another concern, reflecting many worries at the forum, was explored by the head of the Milwaukee Building & Construction Trades Council, Lyle Balistreri, who admitted that he was confused about whether to support health care reform "or condemn it."

He feared that in its current form it could devastate union construction work, which has developed a multi-employer sys-



OPEIU retiree Judy Burnick (left) spoke emotionally for her friend, Theresa Skrzyński.

tem to pay for health care in an industry of many small contractors. "These multi-trusts have worked well for us but they're not cheap."

If the new rules tax these trusts, leaving the unions to fight non-union contractors simply on the hourly wage issue, where non-union companies can always race toward the bottom and undercut union workers, "It will render the unions non-competitive," said Balistreri.

"I agree we should all be paying into this system, but we have done so for years - and God knows over the years paid more than our fair share," he noted. "I resent the notion that working people should pay anymore. Working people have taken all they can take."

"The people who should pay for health care are the people who have profited in an outrageous manner, the people who have already made billions of dollars off of our health care."



BELOW: Gerry Gunderson (also on Page 1) spoke with deep feeling about the limitations of the current health system (see his obituary for his friend, Skip Porter, on Page 16) and pushed for much deeper change in health care.



Lyle Balistreri (left), who speaks for construction workers, worried about their future if health reform taxed their insurance (**the AFL-CIO has taken out similar ads of concern, see Page 17**). Offering information about exemptions and other unsung controls in the healthcare legislation was a visiting professor in the department of political science at Marquette University, panelist, Susan Giaimo.

BELOW: Worries that legislators were too self-assured that they have the answers when "we've barely scratched the surface" was a lawmaker herself, - but also a nurse. Panelist and Assembly member Sandy Pasch expressed her sympathy for the speakers and her concern (see Page 14) that legislators had better be aware of their own limitations.



THE ORTHOPEDIC INSTITUTE OF WISCONSIN

General Orthopedics/Joint Replacement
Joint Reconstruction/Arthroscopic Surgery
Spinal Surgery/Fractures
Sports Medicine/Work Related Injuries

Jeffrey Butler, MD	William Pennington, MD
James Stone, MD	Jamie Edwards, MD
Daniel Guehlstorf, MD	Thomas Perlewitz, MD
Steven Trinkl, MD	Eric Pifel, MD
Joshua Neubauer, MD	

Immediate Appointments Available

Mention this ad.

Suite 102 2901 W. KK River Pkwy. Milwaukee, WI 53215 414-384-6700	Suite 310 2323 N. Mayfair Rd. Milwaukee, WI 53226 414-771-5080	Suite 200 3111 W. Rawson Ave. Franklin, WI 53132 414-325-4320
--	---	--

www.TheOrthoInstitute.com

2810230

Workers Compensation

Lawyers Representing Injured Workers for over 50 years.

Michael H. Gillick - Dennis H. Wicht
Patrick J. Gillick - Charles J. Graf

Claim denied? Job Lost? Back Injured?
Hearing Loss? Other Questions? FOR ANSWERS:

Call 414-257-COMP (2667)

No fees unless we get you money.

Beware trickery even before reform passes

Candice Owley also hears such stories every day as union leader for 3,000 health care workers in the Wisconsin AFT local. The current health reform concept intends to marry the prevalent private insurance industry to improvements in care, including group insurance exchanges to lower costs, deepen basic coverage, explore best practices and wellness programs and remove pre-existing conditions as a gimmick to force people out of insurance. But Owley explored the games private companies are already prepared to play to keep their profits up despite the changes.

"I already see the high deductible tricks targeting people who can't afford this," talking about the plans that reduce premiums on paper by insisting on high co-pays or thousands in basic deductibles, which tempt consumers who couldn't pay the first wave before coverage kicks in. The myth of savings, Owley suggests, even "lures professionals who should know better." There's been a huge increase in the expansion of the high deductible plans.

"So much of our problem is



Nurse leader Owley's detailed warnings about trickery underway by providers had the legislators at the forum taking notes.

lack of access - and there are new and even nastier trends in the insurance" -- such as forcing people to pay add-ons if they ride motorcycles or smoke. "And the cost! We represent people who take home a \$10 paycheck because so much has been taken out ahead of that for their premiums. Every employer has got to do their share - we cannot have just some employers carry this burden."

Several of the proposed changes will clearly drop down the number of people engaged in paper shuffling and confusing errors in the backrooms of the

industry - and most genuine cost-saving advances won't take place until electronic record-keeping and redundant lab costs are eliminated. But gamesmanship to make a better system look more costly and more limited are underway, Owley warned -- if the legislation is not written carefully and if the private industry is not carefully watched.

For instance, everyone knows that the long-term savings will not be emphasized by private companies but rather the higher initial costs provided in more comprehensive coverage, when insurers can't drop people

for pre-existing conditions or similar health reasons.

But she warned legislators at



JoAnn Anton applauds the stories that move her boss, Kohl, while Lois O'Keefe (below) describes how her boss, Moore, keeps her cool.

the forum that, in effect, even if the health bills bring costs down there will be efforts to reduce trained staff, not just bean counters. That will knock out of work trained professionals at nursing homes and similar medical centers "though I don't know of a nursing home anywhere that is overstaffed."

"It's essential that attention is paid to quality of care, not to just cut down to the bone in Medicare and Medicaid. We have to have balance to not harm the quality. We have to be sure this is not what we intend in cost-containment," she said.



UNITED STEELWORKERS
USW
UNITY AND STRENGTH FOR WORKERS™

Happy Holidays from the United Steelworkers !


Michael Bolton
District Director
District Two

Ernie Dex
Sub-District Director

**Anthony Alfano, Don Collins,
Bill Breihan, and Tanita Mitchell**

Best Wishes for the New Year !

Southern WI Sub District Office
1126 S. 70th Street, STE N509A
West Allis WI 53214
Telephone: 414-475-4560



INTERNATIONAL UNION, UNITED AUTOMOBILE, AEROSPACE AND AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA, UAW

HAPPY HOLIDAYS
REGION 4 UAW

Illinois - Iowa - Minnesota - Montana
Nebraska - North & South Dakota
Wisconsin - Wyoming

DENNIS WILLIAMS, DIRECTOR
RON MCINROY, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
AND STAFF



MILWAUKEE BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL
5941 W. Bluemound Rd. • 475-5880

LYLE A. BALISTRERI
PRESIDENT

More Experience
More Accurate
More Skill
More Efficient

JOY TO ALL

Union Builders Are A Better Value.



"BUY AMERICAN!"
BELL-WELL SALES CO.


• Tool & Die Maker Supplies
N54 W13864 Woodale Drive
Menomonee Falls, WI 53051
For Sales or Service or More Information
Call:
(262) 781-3670

CREATING WISCONSIN'S SKILLED WORKFORCE

AFT-MATC LOCAL 212

Holiday Joy and Glad Tidings

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS,
LOCAL 212-MATC



Best Wishes To You and Yours For a Happy Holiday and a Prosperous New Year

Electrical Workers Local 494

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

3303 S. 103rd St.
327-5202




Forum

From Page 1

started out, believing primary care would make it better," the panelist told the audience of about 100.

"It's worse today. I've never seen anything like this. If you need to be fired up, what you heard tonight is hardly uncommon. I am no expert on health care legislation but the issue does not boil down to insurance reform but a health system reform. The crux is not insurance but health care delivery."

So few of the bright medical students he meets are going into primary care or family practice, tempted by the greater income from specialties, DeBoe said, and that has to change because primary care will be the gatekeepers of a better system.

Another panelist who agreed with his concerns also pointed out what has been rarely discussed, how much of the legislation driving through the Senate to be reconciled with the passed House version does emphasize precisely such assistance.

Susan Giaimo, Ph.D., a visiting professor of political science at Marquette University, noted how many financial incentives and other carrots would increase primary care doctors and nurses.

"I sense a bit of gloom but I say take heart," she told the forum "The problems are real and the stories upsetting, but it's also interesting how little we hear about what's really in the legislation."

Clearly, though, the remedies will not be coming fast enough for suffering everyday Americans, and that was a common theme at the forum. "If one more person dies because we're moving too slowly, shame on our democracy," was a common remark.

Despite the Republican obstinacy, it is hard to find a thinking American, even a private insurance industry CEO, who truly supports the status quo. But the forum was hardly an Obama lovefest either, with as many worries about the bills the Democrats are moving through Congress as there was belief in change.

It was another reason that moderator Sheila Cochran, secretary-treasurer of the labor council, found it interesting that no general media attended though so many political officials and health professionals did. There were, she noted, "no TV cameras, no reporters popping up and down, maybe because there was no sign waving, no death panel fears, just real stories" - not a manipulated posture.

No one agenda was pushed except to contact public officials after this forum and speak from the heart. Many who took the hint are clearly worried whether the legislation is moving fast

For full weight of health testimonials, read Pages 12-14



One panelist simply listened throughout: Pastor Wanda Washington of Grace United.

enough or even in the right direction.

Dr. DeBoe emphasized better health delivery. Rep. Sandy Pasch, a nurse elected to represent the 22nd Assembly District, echoed the call and the danger of legislators thinking they've got the answers.

It was stories like she heard at the forum that drove her to run for office after 30 years as a nurse, she noted.

Her colleagues in Madison, she suggested, are delusional, when they "say things like the federal government should model itself after Badger Care, as if we've got it all fixed. It's the nature of politicians to pat themselves on the back, but we have barely scratched the surface."

"What good is a (Badger) card if no one takes it?" she said. "And too many providers won't."

"I'm seeing (fancy) hospitals being built that as a nurse my patients couldn't afford to walk through the door," she said.

"We have really gone from a mission-driven system to a market-driven system. I'm told that we haven't advanced on mental health because is it 'not a good product line'."

Another nurse on the panel, retiree Vivian DeBeck, an activist for the Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans, has participated in at least 30 such forums,



Bloggers for the AFL-CIO (at right) covered the health forum while Wisconsin Eye (at left) videotaped. The whole thing can be viewed online at: http://www.wiseye.org/wisEye_programming/ARCHIVES-forums.html#2906

and they are still "daunting - I well up with rage hearing them." And like fellow nurse Pasch she wants major improvement not legislative placebos

"But I have to remind all those who have spoken so strongly from the heart," she said, "not to give into anger. Anger and despair do nothing. Anger puts the enemies in control. No bill will make everyone in this room happy, and that is what the enemies are counting on, that divisions will split us apart, keep us from making any gains."

"Remember: groups win. The only way we get something is to work as a group. As a group we should pick out the things that absolutely have to be in there and then we storm Washington," she told the crowd to an eruption of applause. "We are not going to let four Democrats or the Republicans stop anything."

Said panelist Lois O'Keefe, Milwaukee staff chief for Rep. Gwen Moore: "Whenever I get worried and fume and fuss about what's in these bills, and as much as she would prefer this or that because the blue dogs are stopping this or delaying that, I'm brought back to earth by my boss."

"She always reminds me of the bigger picture, to not allow the perfect to be the enemy of the good. And we have to honestly look at history."

O'Keefe recalled how all the elements we now consider essentially right about Medicare were not in the original bill passed under LBJ, "it was pretty bare bones." But after ferocious opposition followed by clear success the rest was quickly added. (Other historians make the same point about the advances in Social Security.)

"So it's not bad that the current bill eliminates the worst practices of the private health industry and that both the House and Senate version support health exchanges and the public option," O'Keefe said. "It's certainly right that everybody will have some skin in this game."

"And we don't stop with this bill. If not everything is best the first time around, we make things better and we work it through."

Giaimo provided a more detailed rundown of elements in the Democrats' health reform that make the bills much more than a fix of the health insurance industry, reminding listeners that in other countries with lower cost and better health care, ways had been found to universal coverage without a single payer system.

Cost examination and oversight does not translate into government takeover. Forcing insurers to compete on price with exchanges prevents them from competing by continuing "worse practices" and would "solve the

gaps in coverage." The reform concept requires all employers to kick in but with special exemptions for smaller employers.

Giaimo also worried about bills short of the ideal, but echoed Cochran on how making bills is as ugly as rendering sausages. The argument may well be about where compromise leads to retreat, but compromise "does not halt advance," she noted. "Every country I studied didn't just pass one law and say we're done. And one thing that has worked is having medical professionals sit on the deciding committees."

"You all know that Sen. Kohl has a reputation of being a bipartisan guy, of working across the aisle," said his chief of staff in Milwaukee, panelist JoAnn Anton, a nice way of reminding the labor dominated crowd that Kohl has also listened attentively to the business community. "Well, who would have ever thought that bipartisanship would now be defined as maybe getting the vote of (GOP Sen.) Olympia Snowe?"

"But I will tell you that Sen. Kohl's support of the public option and for some of the basic principles outlined in this room - health care delivery, cost containment, expanding access - have been compelled by the stories you have shared, by the contacts from you that he has been listening to and moved by. These are the stories we needed to here, and I want to commend those who bring them to us."

Her personal thanks to so many of the labor activists who have led the charge in phone calls, emails and similar contacts brought a smile from moderator Cochran: "That may be the most refreshing thing I've heard in the last six months, especially out of Sen. Kohl's office."

"And we're not through," she announced at the forum's conclusion. This is the AFL-CIO's call to end the old year and start the new to get Congress to hear the stories, and "we will get this done now and that we'll get it even better in the future."



Accept No Substitutes!

The Allied Printing Trades Council Label

It is the only officially recognized all inclusive printing label representing that **all** operations in the production of the printing were done by union labor. It is not a local union emblem indicating that only part of the work was performed under union standards.

Write the words **ALLIED PRINTING TRADES UNION LABEL** on your copy when you send it to the printer!

633 South Hawley Road Suite 100
Milwaukee, WI 53214

Phone: 414.476.1577 Fax: 414.476.2022

Rollovers Made Easy

401(k), 457, 403(b)



Robert S. Johnston

Financial Adviser, Financial Services Representative, MetDESK® Specialist (MetLife's Division of Estate Planning for Special Kids)

9000 W. Chester Street, Suite 105
Milwaukee, WI 53214

www.nextlevelpwm.com

Contact Bob today at (414) 615-4912
or at bob.johnston@nextlevelpwm.com

NEXT LEVEL
Planning & Wealth Management
(An office of MetLife.)

MetLife®

Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (MLIC), New York, NY 10166. Securities and investment advisory services offered by MetLife Securities, Inc. (MSI) (member FINRA/SIPC). MLIC and MSI are MetLife companies. L0609041881exp0710|WI|