

Talking UNION

CWA public, healthcare & education workers

Spring 2011

One Nation Confronts the “Big Lie”

Labor, civil rights groups, and social justice organizations rallied in Washington D.C. by the tens of thousands, on October 2nd, to declare we are “One Nation United for Justice.” While the media’s talking heads repeatedly claim that public employee unions are the problem with the U.S. economy, CWA is joining with organizations across the country to declare our unity.



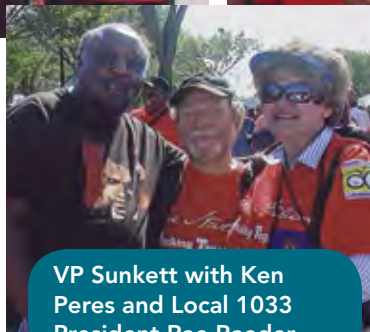
Locals 1033 and 1040 at the One Nation March.



Local 1180 members

In the past year, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie vetoed a tax on millionaires at the same time he cut the school breakfast program for needy children. Christie is sending the message that our kids do not count; they do not have to eat. Christie and conservative politicians throughout the country do not want to “inconvenience” the rich or their corporate America with their fair share of taxes. For example, hedge fund bankers in New York are paying 15% tax on profits made by manipulating money, yet social services across the U.S. are in dire need of dollars.

“The public is being told the big lie—that our problems are due to unions and the size of government and not to fraud, deregulation and the vast concentration of wealth,” said Robert Reich, the former Labor Secretary. CWA is committed to fighting the big lie and to demonstrating the value of government services to



VP Sunkett with Ken Peres and Local 1033 President Rae Raeder.

our citizens. All of our children deserve breakfast; all of them deserve health care. All Americans deserve pension and retirement security. We are one nation and we will not allow ourselves to be divided from the old, the young, the disabled, and the poor.

There have been tough times in the past when the rich have tried to push American workers down. During the Depression of the 1930s workers fought to build unions to defend themselves. Today in 2011, CWA will fight to strengthen our union, the only weapon we have to protect ourselves. We must build our union so we have the ability to fairly tax the rich. Tough times can be overcome by organizing and electing politicians who will stand up to the “Big Lie.” We understand the tasks ahead: build the necessary coalitions, expand our unions and create one nation united for justice.

inside >>

- 2 Message from VP Brooks Sunkett
- 3 Ohio Fights Budget Cuts
- 3 Pension Board Victory in Missouri
- 4 Tennessee’s Model for Organizing
- 6 Organizing Shorts
- 6 Texas Members Meet to Mobilize
- 7 Civil Rights History in Alabama
- 7 California Sets Priorities
- 8 Oklahoma says, “All Hands On Deck!”

A Tough Union for Tough Times

Brooks Sunkett, VP, Public, Healthcare & Education Workers Department



These are tough times and only a tough union can meet the assault that is directed at education workers, public employees, health care workers, and most of America.

In this issue we feature the Tennessee United Campus Workers (UCW-CWA 3865) organizing drive. This is one tough union—a union that refuses to accept the cuts that conservative officials are foisting upon us in every state and city in the U.S. The spirit in Tennessee is reflected in the equally difficult battles being waged in New Jersey, California, Ohio, Oklahoma, Florida, Missouri, Arizona, Iowa, New York, Texas, and Mississippi.

The hard-nosed Tennessee university workers are disproving the backward concept that organizing should only go forward in the few select places that allow collective bargaining. Instead, they are growing the union, intensifying campaigns, and building strength so they are strong enough to influence politicians to raise corporate taxes and taxes on the wealthy, and ultimately, invest in America. Their strategy is to spread the union into every corner of Tennessee. The union sees there is no other way forward but to organize—there is no choice.

Yet, our opponents are fixated on destroying any form of worker organization. In Wisconsin, a bill was introduced recently, that would outlaw public employee unions. Similar legislation, attacking social services, pay scales, and the very right for our unions to exist, are being introduced across the U.S. We must slow down, stall, and sidetrack this concerted effort until we have the strength to go on the offensive.

During these times we have to demand that legislators raise taxes on corporations and the wealthiest one percent. Last year Exxon and GE paid zero in corporate tax. Warren Buffett, one of the richest men in the U.S., paid less in taxes than his secretary. Is this fair or right?

We must rebuild America's roads and water systems, bridges and sewerage systems, and restart manufacturing and mills. CWA is committed to pressuring politicians to raise taxes on the greedy so we have the dollars to apply to these tasks. Those who long for times past, declare victory impossible and want to retreat, should reconsider. The example set by UCW-CWA 3865, shows what can and must be done.

A Special Note

On January 9, Rep. Gabrielle Giffords was shot in Tucson. Sarah Palin's website had "targeted" the Congresswoman's district. Pima County Sheriff Clarence Dupnik pointed out that those who spread bigotry and prejudice cannot talk hate and then be surprised when hateful action follows. CWA represents telephone, police, correction officers, airline workers, city employees, and workers at the School for the Deaf in Tucson. The state of Arizona has cut mental health care expenditures to the bone, leaving only one state mental hospital in operation. The workers there are CWA members so we know that county jails and state prisons have become the main provider of mental health services. To build a just and sane society, we must provide services to the mentally ill and stop the hateful talk. This the only way to stop the violence.

Talking UNION

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DON KESHEL, 1943-2010 MASE-CWA Organizer Dies

Don Keshel wasn't just a good representative for MASE-CWA, he was also a friend to each member.

For five years Don worked as an employee of MASE-CWA and over the past three years, as a contracted recruiter and organizer.

During his tenure, Don organized more than a thousand new members and assisted hundreds of members in dealing with issues that were both minor and complex. He represented members as an expert witness at the Employees' Appeal Board where he was recognized by Hearing Officers as one of the most competent Human Resource professionals in dealing with both disciplinary and Human Rights issues.

Don died of pancreatic cancer on September 7, 2010, after being cared for at home by his wife Donna. He was cremated and interred with full military honors, at Arlington National Cemetery's Columbarium.

Mississippi's state workers will miss him.



Members Fight Looming Budget Cuts

CWA members in Local 4302 and around Ohio are preparing to fight back against potentially massive state budget cuts. Local 4302 President Bob Wise said, “We are getting the word out to our members that the state budget cuts could mean trouble for all public workers, including higher education workers here at the University of Akron (UA) and around Ohio. And we’re gearing up to defend ourselves and our university against any cuts which may hurt our membership or our community.”

News about the Ohio state budget is dire. The projected shortfall is between \$6-8 billion, reflecting approximately 20-30% of the budget. UA gets about one-third of its funding from the state. This July, UA Vice President Scott Borgemenke told the deans at UA that the budget scenario was “unpredictable” and reported that “we should be prepared for 10% budget cuts.”

In addition to the real budget crisis, Ohio now has a political leadership determined to make up this shortfall



CWA 4322 Chief Steward from the University of Akron, Robert Campbell (right) signing up Donald McGinnis (left) at early morning leaflet at UA in December 2010.

through cuts. In November, the Columbus Dispatch reported, “Republican legislative leaders say school districts would be wise to plan for cuts in state aid of 15% or more in the coming budget.” If school districts are targeted for deep cuts, state universities could expect similar treatment.

CWA members at UA and around the state at OSU, Cleveland State, University of Toledo, Shawnee State and other public sector employers are uniting to mobilize against any future cuts to higher education or public services. “We have to be unified. There is power in numbers. We have to stand up against cuts that could harm our members or hurt Ohio’s future,” said UA Chief Steward Robert Campbell.

GET INVOLVED in the fight against budget cuts:

- **Share budget info with others:** Educate and unite!
- **Get involved in COPE:** Join your Local’s Committee on Political Education!
- **Update your contact info** so your union can communicate with you quickly and effectively!
- **Participate in union actions to defend state workers from future cuts!** Sign petitions, call the Governor’s office, and write to your state legislators.

They Say Cut Back, We Say Fight Back

V.P. Laura Davis wins election to MOSERS Board of Trustees

With Missouri’s revenue crisis serving as the background of a fresh attack on public workers, state employees fought back with an impressive victory, electing their own Vice President Laura Davis to the Board of Trustees of the public workers pension system.



Laura started her campaign during the spring when legislators began pushing for elimination of the defined benefit pension plan and replacing it with a risky 401(k) investment scheme. Despite needing only 100 signatures to qualify Laura for the ballot, CWA collected more than 500 signatures from every corner of the state. As the election rolled around in August, CWA stewards helped leaflet the larger metropolitan areas and called every member in Missouri to make sure they knew about Laura’s candidacy. Laura also used modern

networking tools like Facebook to help spread the word. When the voting ended on August 31st, Laura had bested eight other candidates for a spot on the Board of Trustees.

“This would not have been possible without a strong statewide union like CWA that was prepared to mobilize on my behalf,” said Laura after learning of her victory. “I promise to be a forceful voice for our members in protecting the benefits we have earned.”



Laura lobbying against cuts to MOSERS with CWA leaders Kara Garroutte and Carolyn Wells.

[The union thanks CWA Local 6186 in Texas, who also successfully elected a member to their pension board, for their advice and inspiration in this campaign.]

Tennessee's UCW-CWA:

Against all odds, United Campus Workers-CWA 3865 (UCW-CWA) is organizing university workers in Tennessee. Now in Memphis, Murfreesboro, Cookeville, Knoxville, and Chattanooga, the organization of university workers throughout the state proves an interesting and good model.

UCW-CWA has no collective bargaining and no payroll deduction of dues. Republicans dominate the Tennessee legislature and the state has a Republican governor. Despite the lack of pro-labor politicians, university workers have refused to accept that they can't organize. The dedication of their organizers, officers, and activists continues to overcome all the obstacles placed in their path.

UCW-CWA's campaign is funded primarily by dues collected from some of the lowest paid workers in the country, whose wages rival those of state workers in Mississippi and Oklahoma. Additionally, the CWA national office has supported the campaign.

During the Great Depression, the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) began organizing without collective bargaining or dues check-off. [In 1955, the CIO joined the American Federation of Labor, forming today's AFL-CIO.] Like the CIO, UCW-CWA's steadfast determination during our current time of economic crisis and hostile politicians, is something to

emulate. Finding ways to organize and building enough political strength to win collective bargaining rights and dues deductions will turn our states around.

UCW-CWA is claiming the right to organize in Tennessee, the right to speak for themselves, the right to build their union and change Tennessee and, in so doing, the country.



Nashville

Murfreesboro

Memphis



Union leaders Thelma Jean Rimmer (left) and Emma Davis (right).

Memphis

UCW-CWA organizing efforts in Memphis are heating up at three higher education institutions.

Organizing drives at the University of Memphis, Southwest Community College, and the UT Health Science Center have produced a base of over 200 new union members who are helping advance the union's program for fair pay and jobs!

Of particular note is coalition work that is being done with local religious organizations who are partnering with UCW-CWA to pressure

the University of Memphis to pay a living wage to its employees. At an employee speakout, union members spoke before the University of Memphis community about their plight of working full time for the state, with many of the workers making less than \$14,000 a year.

Emma Davis, a UCW-CWA leader, testified: "We don't have a person to speak out or up for us, and I know that the union can do that. There are some people who have been here 20-some years and they're still just making \$8 an hour. \$8 an hour! It's really sad that a single parent has to work two or three jobs just to make ends meet. That's the reason I joined. I believe in this union and I know that when we stick together we'll have a better outcome."



Members at the first Annual Statewide Meeting

A Model for Organizing

Cooksville



Knoxville



Murfreesboro



Chattanooga

Middle Tennessee (Murfreesboro)

A strong UCW-CWA chapter at Middle Tennessee State University is growing and now has more than 100 members. The chapter elected its first Vice President, Rick Kurtz, and has been very active in supporting the union's electoral work.



Members at MTSU signing a letter to the UCW E-board, requesting to become a chapter of UCW

Organizationally, the chapter is developing. It now has a vice president who sits on the UCW-CWA state-wide executive board, as well as an associate vice president who assists with the chapter-level meetings and tasks. The secretary takes the minutes at meetings and generally supports the vice presidents. The chapter has active committees (legislative, organizing, welcoming, and mobilization) with committee chairs who convene meetings and focus on different areas of work. The chairs also bring ideas to, and give reports at the monthly meetings.

Nashville

With a new Governor and a new General Assembly, union members must let elected officials know how the economic crisis is adversely affecting their families and quality of life.

Therefore, Nashville has developed the following priorities:

1. Responding to the new state insurance plan, with its skyrocketing prices and benefit cuts.
2. Living wages for all higher education employees and a long-overdue equal-dollar pay raise.
3. Protecting jobs, programs and state funding as the stimulus ends.
4. Obtaining due-process rights already provided to other state employees, including a consistent grievance policy and procedure.

There are good signs in Tennessee. In the first quarter of this fiscal year, sales tax collections outpaced projections by \$46 million, the highest since 2007. As these trends continue, the excuse of a "bad economy" cannot be used to keep hard-working higher education employees down. Despite the fact that the state economy seems to be rallying, there will be no "economic recovery" until working class Tennesseans see improvements.



Knoxville

At Pellissippi State Community College in Knoxville, close

to 50 staff

and faculty have joined the union

to build a voice at work. Sydney

Gingrow, a Pellissippi employee,

said "I've worked at Pellissippi State for 32 years. I've seen many

changes at this institution, most for the good. But I find that at

this point, it is very valuable for all of us to become members

of the United Campus Workers. This is an opportunity to look

at some of the challenges we face as employees of Tennessee

in higher education institutions. It's an excellent opportunity to

belong, to be active, and to think about our future."

Members at Pellissippi State Community College in Knoxville

Tennessee Tech, 100 miles from Knoxville, has 1,100 employees.

The union there is addressing issues of outsourcing and pay equity. The goals are to keep all members of the Tech family employed at Tech, and to stop the outsourcing of campus custodians. Gender pay equity is also an issue, as well as consistency in pay scales and upgrades or promotions across departments. The union wants to see increased funding from the state, as well as yearly cost of living raises.

Organizing Shorts

Arizona

All eight print shop workers in the Tucson Unified School District have joined CWA. The school district will recognize them and roll the group into the already existing unit. This is the local's second print shop organizing gain. Local President Linda Hatfield and Local Organizer Maritza Broce worked with the group.

Maryland

Workers at American Red Cross in Baltimore won an election by 5-2, with one challenged ballot. The company ran an intense anti-union campaign but the workers held strong and even overcame a stipulation that required all designated "ones" to vote yes. Local 2100 organizer Pam Wilt led the campaign with the support of Local President Mark Balsamo.

Iowa Hospital Workers

Seeking strong representation, 90 employees at Hamilton (County) Hospital in Webster City, Iowa, have voted to join CWA. The unit will include nurses, therapists, technicians and other direct patient care workers.

In Osage, Iowa, 15 nurses at the Mitchell County Hospital voted to affiliate with CWA. They joined the Hamilton Hospital patient care workers as part of the Iowa Staff Nurses Association.

The units are part of District 7's campaign to organize public hospital workers throughout Iowa, said District Organizing Coordinator Jeff Lacher. CWA represents 200 registered nurses at two other public hospitals in the state. District 7 Staff Representative Bonnie Winther, Local Organizer Teri Murphy and Assistant to VP Chris Kennedy assisted with both campaigns.

And, 911 Dispatchers

In Coralville, Iowa, dispatchers at the Joint Emergency Communications Center voted 18-0 to join CWA Local 7101. The workers handle 911 calls for both Iowa and Johnson counties. District 7 Staff Representative Bonnie Winther, Local President Scott Rentschler and CWAers Steve Abbott and Carey King were involved in the campaign.

Texas State Employees Union-CWA Local 6186's General Assembly sets plan for 2011

More than 200 elected delegates attended TSEU-CWA 6186's General Assembly, the convention of the statewide local. The meeting was held against a backdrop of growing attacks on public workers across the country and dire predictions of a massive deficit in the state budget.



TSEU's General Assembly kicked off with a One Nation rally at the state capitol.

Delegates adopted aggressive organizing and political programs for the next two years. In non-collective bargaining, minority representation campaigns, organizing always takes priority. The goal is to organize majorities at major agencies and universities so TSEU has the power to take on opponents.

TSEU's political program emphasizes grassroots work and COPE participation as the basis for political power. With a large and growing COPE membership, TSEU made more than \$26,000 in contributions to candidates who committed to support state services and employees. These contributions, along with the work of getting out the vote among members and in the community, made TSEU an important factor in numerous recent elections.

TSEU delegates also affirmed the commitment to running and promoting candidates for the two boards that govern state employee pensions: the Employees Retirement System of Texas, and the Teacher Retirement System of Texas. The union has had members on both boards for several years, and winning these elections is a priority every other year.

While most of the media is protecting the interests of the well-to-do, Jim Hightower exposes the truth about the U.S. Subscribe to America's hottest, feistiest little newsletter and help support pro-labor, pro-people media. Read and talk about the *Hightower Lowdown* to stop the lies that bash public employees.



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Alabama Offers a Civil Rights Vacation

Think about taking your family on a summer vacation through history. Alabama is home to several major civil rights battles. Spend a few days and get a new sense of our country's past.

Drive to Alabama or fly directly into Birmingham. Your families will enjoy this historic trip, not far from the Gulf of Mexico, Memphis, or Atlanta.

Birmingham

The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, 520 16th St. North, Ph. 866-328-9696, www.bcri.org
This museum is across the street from the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, a center for the civil rights struggle and the site of the Klan bombing that killed four girls attending Sunday school. The museum has photos, videos, and exhibits about the struggle for justice.

Selma

National Voting Rights Museum, 6 Highway 80 East, Ph. 334-418-0800, www.nvrm.org
The museum is located at the Edmund Pettus Bridge, where police brutally attacked civil rights marchers in 1965. Focused on items and stories from participants in the voting rights movement, volunteer guides share their recollections with visitors. Annie Pearl Avery a former SNCC organizer, was leading tours in 2010.

Montgomery

Civil Rights Memorial Center, Southern Poverty Law Center, 400 Washington Ave., Ph. 334-956-8200, www.splcenter.org
The memorial honors 40 individuals who died and chronicles the history of the movement, from the 1954 landmark *Brown v. Board* decision to the assassination of Dr. King in 1968.

Rosa Parks Library & Museum & Children's Annex, Troy University, 252 Montgomery St., Ph. 334-241-8615, www.montgomery.troy.edu/museum/
Multimedia presentations, period photography and dioramas bring to life the story of Rosa Parks and Montgomery bus boycott.

Tuskegee

Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site, 1616 Chappie James Ave., Ph. 334-724-0922
Features the airmen who helped end segregation in the Armed Forces after WWII. Also encompasses Moton Field where the airmen trained for flight.

The Tuskegee Human and Civil Rights Multicultural Center, 104 S. Elm St., Ph. 334-724-0800, www.tuskegeecenter.org
Highlights the civil rights story that spanned 70 years and changed the course of American history.

Birmingham

Montgomery

Selma

Tuskegee

U.S. 80

From Montgomery to Selma in Lowndes County

Ph. 334-877-1984, www.nps.gov
On U.S. 80 at the Lowndes County Line, the National Park Service has developed the Voting Rights Trail Interpretive Center with photos and memorabilia of the voting rights battle.

Recommended Labor Reading

From the Telegraph to the Internet by Morty Bahr.
The development of the information age through the eyes and story of Morty Bahr, CWA president from 1986-2005.

The Man Who Hated Work and Loved Labor: The Life and Times of Tony Mazzocchi by Les Leopold.
Story of the late Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union leader's struggle to address the unconscionable toxic exposure of tens of thousands of workers that led to the passage of the Occupational Safety and Health Act and included work alongside nuclear whistleblower Karen Silkwood.

Embedded with Organized Labor by Steve Early.
In these 38 essays Early analyzes the leaders, strategies, defeats and victories of American labor's recent history. The qualities he values in unions are: democracy, accountability, inclusiveness and genuine empowerment of members to conduct their own battles. Union activist, organizer, and educator since the 1970s, Early worked for CWA for 27 years, starting in 1980.

CALIFORNIA'S UPTE sets TOP PRIORITIES: Protecting Pensions, AP Organizing

At their 21st Annual UPTE-CWA Convention, delegates passed resolutions and constitutional amendments designed to guide UPTE's activities for the next year.

Workshops included updates on pensions and benefits, laboratory safety standards, bargaining for work and family balance, organizing, layoff rights, what's new in the RX/TX contract, peace and justice issues, and legislative and political work.

A session on the ramped-up organizing drive to achieve representation for administrative professionals (AP) at the University of California focused on the need to support the effort by talking with co-workers and sharing the positive effects of an UPTE contract.

Delegates passed resolutions to support the administrative professionals' organizing drive, mobilizing to fight attacks on public sector pensions and public education, internal training programs for diversity and inclusion, and in opposition to the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

State Workers: "ALL HANDS ON DECK, or ELSE!"

After the November elections, when Republicans took over the Oklahoma legislature, CWA-OSWU Local 6086 members organized a "sound the alarm" political action committee to ensure state workers understand "ALL HANDS ON DECK, or ELSE!"

Due to the anticipated attacks on defined pension plans, health care benefits, longevity pay, staffing levels, and wages, the union is collecting personalized messages from workers to be presented to legislators during the 2011 session.

In talking about the attacks, Alonzo Candler, CWA-OSWU Vice President, and Retired Captain for the Department of Corrections stated, "They are already carrying out furloughs in some state agencies like the Department of Corrections where staffing is at 70% while the inmate population is at 99%. Still, our Governor-Elect spoke of streamlining the government. Any more streamlining will in fact dry out state services and state agency budgets and further hurt state workers and citizens."



Prior to the elections, CWA-OSWU held coffees, luncheons, town hall meetings, political phone bank gatherings, and volunteered in numerous political campaigns.

CWA-OSWU committee members at the Department of Human Services organized a town hall gathering where several Republican and Democratic



legislators discussed issues such as pay, benefits, and case loads, as well as the constant threat of privatization to all state workers nationwide. At the event, Republican Senator Bill Brown agreed to co-sponsor legislation requesting across-the-board pay raises for all state workers because he understands that the increases are long overdue. CWA-OSWU members and Representatives Shumate, McDaniel, and Scott, all Democrats, said they would co-sponsor that legislation. They also noted the importance of belonging to a union and being active in the political process. Long time CWA-OSWU member Amelia Henderson, who served as moderator, lamented, "Either we all stand for state worker justice, or we continue to fall for state worker injustices."

EDUCATE YOURSELF to Defend Public Employee Pensions

The booklet, "Public Employee Pension Funds Under Assault: An Introduction to Strategic Issues for Public, Healthcare & Education Workers" and the brochure, "A Primer on Public Pension Plans" are available now from:



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ORDER NOW!

Keep New Jersey News Publicly-Owned

In December, committees in both the New Jersey Senate and Assembly approved of a bill that allows Governor Christie to sell the radio licenses owned by the New Jersey News (NJN) but will retain the television licenses in a revamped Public Broadcasting Authority. The bills authorize the State Treasurer to enter into negotiations about how to deliver programming, and the state legislature will have to approve that plan before it goes into effect.

While this provides a path to keep NJN on the air, the process raises concern. Decisions about public broadcasting using taxpayer-owned licenses should be made in public, not in a back room.

The "Keep the NJ in NJN" coalition plans work with the Governor and the Legislature to ensure any agreement contains public funding, and an in-state production partner to continue the quality New Jersey news and programming residents demand and deserve.

Visit www.KeeptheNJinNJN.com to sign the petition to save public broadcasting and receive updates.

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie is the country's most anti-union, anti-public worker governor. Christie has become infamous for his loud, mean-spirited assaults on the state's employees, despite the fact that 60,000 CWA members and other unionized public workers have made a half-billion dollars in wage and benefit concessions over the last three years. CWA New Jersey continues to aggressively lobby, mobilize and rally to oppose Christie's extreme agenda.