

**Report of the
Civil Rights and Equity Committee
to the
74th Convention**



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TAKING A LOOK AT THE GUN PROTECTION LAWS IN OUR COUNTRY

Stand Your Ground, Trevon Martin, justifiable homicide. Virginia Tech, 32 people killed, seventeen wounded. James Holmes, accused of killing twelve people in a movie theater in Colorado. Jacob Roberts shot two people and took his own life in a shopping mall near Portland, Oregon. Adam Lanza killed twenty young children and six adults in an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut. Sisters and Brothers it is time we have an honest discussion.

This is your CWA Civil Rights & Equity Committee. Some of you may be asking, "How is the gun issue relevant to civil rights & equity?" That is a fair question considering that the media only covers the most horrific tragedies like Virginia Tech and Newtown. But, in the African American and Hispanic communities, in the inner city neighborhoods, on the blocks where I live in New York City, these tragedies happen every day. Every day guns disproportionately kill African Americans and Latinos. Every day African Americans and Latinos are sent to jail for possession of guns. Every day innocent African Americans are "stopped and frisked" for guns because of the color of their skin and where they live. Sisters and Brothers, guns are very much a civil rights & equity issue.

Some believe that the solution to the gun problem need only focus on people and not guns themselves. It is this short-sighted thinking that leads to misguided and prejudicial "Stand Your Ground" laws and "Stop & Frisk" policies.

When do we have the discussion in this country of what to do about how guns are issued and distributed? When do we have the discussion of how we treat and take care of the mentally ill in this country? When do we talk about the fact that in minority communities most African American males wonder if they will live to see the age of thirty or be incarcerated for a major part of their life due to lack of jobs and discriminatory police practices, as well as the use of illegal guns?

Sixteen states have "stand your ground" laws or "castle doctrines." The fact of the matter is that these laws have increased the so-called justifiable homicides from seventeen percent to fifty percent in these states. An economics professor and a PhD student at Texas A&M University did this study. They found significant evidence that the laws actually increase the homicide rate rather than decrease the rate in these states. And, they have no impact on crime.

“Stop and Frisk” has become a big debate in New York City (NYC). The current Mayor promulgated this police procedure with the Police Commissioner to deter crime and get guns off the street. Quoting from the New York Times, “The NYC Police Department has come under increased scrutiny in recent years over the racial disparities and the sheer volume of street stops it makes under its ‘stop, question and frisk’ policy.” In 2011 the records show that police made over 680,000 stops. Eighty percent of those people stopped were Black or Latino. There is currently a class action lawsuit accusing the department of using race as a basis for stops. Four precincts have the highest use rate of this policy. Guess which neighborhoods these precincts are located in? Yes, you are correct, Black and Latino neighborhoods.

There is a myth that “Stop and Frisk” gets guns off the street and, therefore, prevents murders. The fact is that according to the New York Civil Liberties Union, guns are found in less than .2 percent of stops. What actually happens in these stops is that young Black and Latino men are arrested for resisting arrests, carrying illegal substances like marijuana, and are then placed in the system. Many of them never get their name pulled out of this system, and, therefore, become tarnished for life. “Stop and Frisk” is not effective gun control. “Stop and Frisk” will never prevent another Newtown. It will, however, lead to more incarceration of African Americans and Latinos.

Over half (51 percent) of the inmates in custody on January 1, 2011, were African American, a quarter were Hispanic (25 percent), and a fifth were White (22 percent). There is something systemically unjust here. I personally have nephews and other male family members who were stopped and frisked for no good reason and feared for their life while being interrogated by a policeman on the street.

It is often said that guns don’t kill people, people kill people. This is a true statement, but it does not set aside that the problem is two-fold: people who should not have guns and the availability of guns themselves. On average, 24 people die each day as result of gun violence and many more are wounded. The high rate of shootings cited earlier indicates that there is a continued need to get weapons out of the hands of people who should not have them, i.e., criminals and the mentally challenged. The U.S. Constitution says we have the right to bear arms to protect our families and our property. On this basic right we all agree. But, when the Constitution was written, assault rifles and weapons of war did not exist. Too many of our children in African American and Latino neighborhoods, that you will never hear about on the 6:00 pm news, are being killed and murdered by illegal guns. Too many incidents are happening day to day where a mentally ill person has possession of a gun, obtained legally or illegally, and then goes on a killing spree. They take their own life and we are left stunned with yet another senseless tragedy.

The big question is how do we resolve this gun issue.

Senator Dianne Feinstein has introduced legislation on an assault weapons ban. She states and I quote, "We must balance the desire of a few to own military-style assault weapons with the growing threat to lives across America. If twenty dead children in Newtown wasn't a wakeup call that these weapons of war don't belong on our streets, I don't know what is."

Or, is it the President's plan, which includes the following:

- closing background check loopholes to keep guns out of dangerous hands;
- banning military-style assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, and taking other common-sense steps to reduce gun violence;
- making schools safer; and
- increasing access to mental health services.

The Civil Rights and Equity Committee believes that it is morally wrong to continue to allow the loopholes in gun laws that make it easy for anyone to obtain assault weapons. It is morally wrong to do nothing as our children die in the streets. It is morally wrong to place into legislation laws that allow African Americans and Latinos to be singled out, incarcerated, and even murdered, and call that gun control.

Brothers and Sisters, there are some issues upon which we will not all agree. That is not only okay, but how it should be in a truly diverse and democratic organization such as CWA. However, even on controversial issues, this union has always, and I believe will always, strive for what is morally right. We do not run from the controversial issues, or avoid heated debate just because the problem is hard and emotional with no clear cut solution. Rather, we work through the tough issues and find agreement where we can, while, at the same time, respecting the differences in opinion that remain. Therefore, it is not essential that we all agree on how guns should be controlled or how laws should be changed that discriminate against minorities. However, it is time that we have the discussion.

Sisters and Brothers, I submit to you today, at this convention, that CWA has always been the progressive Union. The CWA National Committee on Civil Rights & Equity believes that NOW IS THE TIME FOR CHANGE!

INCOME INEQUALITY

Income inequality in America is something we do not often think about, we just know it exists and deal with the segregation. And, it is no longer just the segregation of race; it attacks all citizens and members of society. This is a vast topic that covers wages, rights, housing, and education for all Americans.

Throughout this report we will show you some of the major impacts of income inequality and some solutions to combat one of the most critical issues in our nation.

Over the past three decades we have seen a steady decline in the average hourly wage and salaries of production and non-supervisory workers. Taking into consideration inflation and cost of living increases, earnings for most Americans are lower today than they were in 1973. Millions of Americans are buried in debt and are desperate to find a way out. Some resort to taking out a second mortgage on their homes to cover basic short-term necessities, but eventually end up losing everything. In contrast, almost all of the country's economic gains went to the wealthiest, who have seen a dramatic increase in their income. In fact, growing wealth inequality has made the United States one of the most unequal rich nations in the world with a wealth gap wider than any other advanced country, except for Mexico and Turkey.

While the regular worker is struggling, corporate executives have seen pay increases far in excess of those enjoyed by typical workers. CEOs have always made more money than the workers they manage, but the gap has gotten increasingly large over the years. In the mid-20th century the average pay for a CEO was \$24 to each \$1 for the average employee; today it is around \$243 to the same \$1. While the CEOs get richer, they place the costs on the backs of their employees. When we come to the table for negotiations, the company cries that profits are down and they are losing money. In turn, they cut funding to projects that benefit the employees (healthcare, education assistance, supplies, and hours). But, they keep the excessive salaries and bonuses that are being distributed at the corporate level. The average employee has to work twice as hard and twice as long to make the same money he or she was making in the 1990s. This is what leads to the desecration of families.

In addition to addressing economic inequality as a whole, attention needs to be directed to the communities of color, as they are most impacted by the nation's economic divide. Their poverty and unemployment rates are nearly twice the national average and they are disproportionately impacted by cuts to public sector jobs. Since 2005, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans have experienced a staggering drop in wealth. African Americans and Asian Americans have seen their net worth decrease by half and the wealth of Hispanic Americans decreased by two thirds. Households in the wealthiest one percent now control 225 times the net wealth as the average worker. Only two percent of Blacks and 1.7 percent of Latinos earn \$100,000 or more as compared to 5.7 percent of Whites. On the other end of the equation, 33.8 percent of Blacks and 37.3 percent of Latinos earn less than \$10,000 as compared to 25.4 percent of Whites. With such a few assets to fall back on in hard times and few opportunities for well paying jobs, Black and Latino families rely heavily on unemployment insurance, Social Security, and welfare in times of need. With great shifts like this, America is turning into the wealthy and the poor, while the middle class is slowly disappearing.

Now is a critical time for working and middle class Americans to bridge the economic divide by contacting policymakers in Washington to recommend a budget that focuses not only on the deficit but also jobs and workers rights. We need to forge alliances with other labor organizations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) whose mission is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic rights of all people and eliminate race-based discrimination. Truly, the only way for our country to pull itself out of the recession is to grow and there is no part of the economy that needs more attention and growth than the middle and lower class.

“FROM THE DARKNESS OF INEQUALITY COMES A RAINBOW OF HOPE AND JUSTICE”

The hardest part is to understand; the easiest part is to deny someone his or her human rights. The struggle for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights continues from Compton’s Cafeteria in 1966 and Stonewall Inn in 1969 to the present. Our LGBT sisters and brothers are still fighting for equality in the workplace and general society. According to a study published in 2001 by the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law, reports of discrimination based on sexual orientation are roughly equal to those on race or gender. The group that has it the hardest is our transgender brothers and sisters. In a study by the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE), ninety percent of those surveyed reported experiencing harassment, mistreatment, or discrimination.

It is more than numbers; it is people’s lives that hang in the balance. I helped Bella (not her real name) get a job at AT&T Wireless. She was a union member. She was nervous going to the interview because her license did not show her chosen name or gender identity. According to the NCTE only one fifth (21 percent) of transgendered people have been able to update all of their IDs and records with their new gender. Still, AT&T Wireless, within their Code of Business Conduct, had protections for gay, lesbian, and transgendered individuals. During her new hire orientation, she advised the company what she liked to be called and they agreed. Unfortunately, when co-workers found out her identity, the jokes and snickering started. Bella struggled with depression and hoped the union bargained healthcare plan would cover her needed treatment. She also hoped that her healthcare coverage would help with her sex-change surgery and the required treatments. None of it, however, was covered. She could not afford it on her own. In the end, the constant abuse caused Bella to quit AT&T Wireless. She moved out of her unsupportive parent’s home. As a result of her unemployment, Bella was forced to join the underground economy to pay for illegally obtained hormone medication.

Bella’s story is not uncommon. Studies show that eleven percent of transgendered individuals who have family support, versus nineteen percent with unsupportive families, join the underground economy and suicide rates double.

The study by NCTE also found that the suicide rate for transgender individuals ranged from 37 percent up to sixty percent, depending on employment status. This is much higher than exists in the general population. I loved Bella, but unsupportive parents, the difficulties of finding work, and the lack of healthcare coverage was too much to overcome and we lost contact. To this day, I think about her and thank God for the lessons she taught me about the struggles of life for those that feel different.

Where do we stand at this time in our country? In December 2010, President Obama signed a bill that would allow gays to serve openly in the military, joining 44 other countries that have similar laws. On May 9, 2012, President Obama stated that he supports gay marriage, becoming the first U.S. President to ever do so while still in office. Then, in his second inaugural address, he proclaimed, "Our journey is not complete until our gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law, for if we are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well."

Almost half the states, and the District of Columbia, have laws that currently prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation in both public and private jobs. Some states and local governments also prohibit workplace discrimination based on gender identity -- an individual's self-identified gender versus their anatomical sex at birth. Even in states without specific statutes, courts have sometimes interpreted other antidiscrimination statutes, like those protecting individuals based on their gender, to include gender identity.

But, this is not enough.

Proposition 8 is a California ballot measure that passed in November of 2008. The measure added a new provision, Section 7.5 of the Declaration of Rights, to the California Constitution, which stated that "only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California." By restricting the recognition of marriage to opposite-sex couples, the proposition overturned a California Supreme Court ruling that same-sex couples have a constitutional right to marry. At the federal level, The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) is a law that defines marriage as the legal union of one man and one woman for federal and inter-state recognition purposes in the United States. Section 3 of DOMA codifies the non-recognition of same-sex marriages for all federal purposes, including insurance benefits for government employees, Social Security survivors' benefits, immigration, and the filing of joint tax returns. Section 3 of DOMA has been found unconstitutional in eight federal courts, including the First and Second Circuit Court of Appeals. Nonetheless, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear an appeal in one of those cases, *United States v. Windsor*, and scheduled oral arguments for March 27, 2013.

Many of my CWA sisters and brothers ask why civil unions are not enough. The answer is clear. While civil unions are a step in the right direction, our LGBT

brothers and sisters still miss out on 1,138 federal benefits and protections of marriage that are only available to couples who are allowed to legally marry.

As labor density continues to decline, and progressiveness and fairness slip away, President Cohen has moved our Union towards coalition building to create a movement big enough and strong enough to restore democracy and fairness for all people in the country. The LGBT community is one of our natural allies in this movement. They, too, are workers. Many more than you may realize, like Bella, are good union members. So, support our sisters and brothers at Pride@Work. Become a member regardless if you are “straight” or “gay.” It doesn’t matter. Also, support efforts for marriage equality and city ordinances for nondiscrimination. We can no longer afford to focus on our superficial differences; rather, we must focus on our common core beliefs in equality, fairness, and justice.

We are an endangered species and as the famous union song asks, “Which side are you on?” We want to be on the right side of history. It is all hard work, but we have done it before and we will do it again. Just remember Bella’s story and that we are all part of the rainbow of life, full of hope and justice. Love is our weapon in the civil rights fight of our generation.

MONEY IN POLITICS

The 2012 Election was the most expensive in history and a small subset of wealthy donors overwhelmingly outspent average citizens. The numbers speak for themselves.¹ The top 32 Super PACs gave an average of \$9.9 million each and almost sixty percent of Super PAC funding came from just 159 donors with contributions of \$1 million or more. More than ninety percent of the money Super PACs raised came in donations of \$10,000 or more from an incredibly small number of individuals. And, after wealthy individuals, for-profit corporations were the second largest donors to Super PACs. Furthermore, more than thirty percent of outside spending, of which Super PACs account for more than half, was “secret spending” that cannot be traced back to its original source, preventing citizens from being able to fairly judge the content of political messaging.

As we can see, spending on modern elections is completely dominated by the wealthy and their special interests. Not only does this outsized spending help win elections for candidates favored by the wealthy elite, in many cases even opposition candidates are forced to take policy positions that favor this small group just to stay competitive in elections. Furthermore, because of the

¹ Campaign finance numbers come from Bowie, Blair and Lioz, Adam, “Billion-Dollar Democracy: The Unprecedented Role of Money in the 2012 Elections,” *Demos* and *U.S. PIRG*, January 2013, <http://www.demos.org/sites/default/files/publications/BillionDollarDemocracy_Demos.pdf> (accessed 20 February 2013)

enormous cost of campaigning, average citizens have no chance of running in an election without having previous wealth. The average citizen's donation has no chance of competing with the contributions of the wealthy elite, leaving him or her with no hope of a successful election campaign. As a result, the policy makers sent to Washington and state capitals are inherently differential to their donors, placing the agenda of the few major contributors over the interests of the citizenry. And, research indicates that those that comprise this wealthy donor class hold policy preferences that are diametrically opposed to the preferences of the vast majority of Americans.²

Moreover, these wealthy donors include some of the nation's largest and richest companies, like Koch Industries, Exxon Mobile, and AT&T. They have joined forces to invest millions of dollars each year to promote the careers of thousands of lawmakers and secure passage of legislation that puts corporate interests ahead of the interests of ordinary Americans. For example, take the case of Amgen, the world's largest biotechnology firm. The New York Times found that Amgen managed to convince lawmakers to sneak in a provision to the recent "fiscal cliff" bill that strongly favored one of its drugs.³ This provision allowed Amgen to continue to collect Medicare refunds for their drugs at inflated prices, collecting excessive profits off of taxpayer dollars. Furthermore, the lawmakers that supported this provision received tens of thousands of dollars in campaign contributions from Amgen.

Despite the American ideal of one-man/one-vote and political equality, the most recent election demonstrated that we are moving farther away from that goal. With the *Citizens United v. FEC* case the Supreme Court permitted unlimited spending from corporations, unions, and other special interests. In the 2012 Election, we saw the effects of that ruling and how it marginalized the average citizen. We cannot continue to allow the voices of the many to be drowned out by the few.

It does not have to be this way. CWA alone cannot confront these problems. We must join forces with other likeminded AFL-CIO constituency groups, such as the A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI), the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA), the Asian Pacific Alliance for Labor Advancement (APALA), the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), and Pride @ Work. Similarly, we must join forces with natural allies like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA), the Sierra Club, the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) to build a movement. With this movement we can push for real reform, including:

² *Ibid.*, 15-17

³ Lipton, Eric and Kevin Sack, "Fiscal Footnote: Big Senate Gift to Drug Maker," *The New York Times*, 20 January 2013, Pg. A1

- a constitutional amendment that limits the ability of special interests to unfairly influence elections;
- pressuring the FEC to tighten rules on how Super PACs can coordinate with candidates, and force Super PACs to disclose their political donors;
- pressuring Congress to allow for tax credits, or matching funds, to encourage contributions from small donors;
- pressuring states to adopt their own laws to limit spending on elections; and
- supporting legislation that addresses campaign finance law.

These reforms will not be easy to enact. They will certainly face opposition from the special interests and corporations that benefit from loopholes that allow them to purchase lawmakers. Fortunately, the general public is behind reform. With a strong movement of national partners and allies, we can fight back and earn an equal voice for all.

TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is a trade agreement being negotiated among the United States, Canada, Mexico, Chile, Australia, Brunei, Malaysia, New Zealand, Vietnam, Singapore, and Peru. Japan is extremely interested at this time as well. Some have described it as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on steroids. NAFTA, which went into effect in 1994, includes the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Prior to NAFTA, in 1993, the United States had a trade surplus with Mexico of \$1.6 billion. By 2010, the deficit with Mexico totaled \$97.2 billion. Between 1994 and 2010 almost 683,000 U.S. jobs were displaced to Mexico; one can only imagine how many more jobs we will lose with eleven other countries involved. In the 1992 presidential debate on NAFTA Ross Perot said, "There will be a giant sucking sound going south." We now know that sucking sound is the sound of jobs leaving the United States.

The TPP has been shrouded in secrecy. All journalists, nearly all businesses and public interest groups, and the majority of Congress have been denied effective access to the negotiating texts. Even Ron Wyden, Chairman of the Senate Trade Subcommittee, has not been permitted to see the text or to know the contents. However, 600 corporate advisors – including Verizon and Wal-Mart – have been given access. The actual text will not be released until four years after the talks have been concluded or a deal has been reached. Only the negotiating nations' trade representatives and their advisors know the current content because the text of the agreement is classified and concealed. Fortunately, there have been some leaks of key documents so that we can have a sense of what is happening.

Will the TPP include effective and enforceable protections of labor rights? Only time will tell. Failure to include enforceable labor rights, such as collective

bargaining, would allow a number of countries to continue current policies that impose low wages and poor working conditions and fail to recognize basic labor rights. If ample and enforceable labor standards are not included, U.S. workers would be at a disadvantage as they compete against low wages and a low standard of labor practices. Additionally, the agreement must have some guarantee against the loss of jobs in the United States. Without such a guarantee, the agreement will only further degrade our already fragile economy and put more people out of work.

However, the TPP will provide significant enforceable privileges for private corporations that include the following:

- rights to acquire land, natural resources, factories without government review;
- rights to sue the U.S. government in an international arbitration tribunal;
- risks and costs of off shoring to low wage countries eliminated;
- special guaranteed “minimum standard of treatment” for relocating firms;
- compensation for loss of “expected future profits” from health, labor, or environmental laws (indirect or regulatory); and
- the right to move capital without limits.

Basically, foreign corporations operating in the United States would not be held accountable to our laws regarding protection for the environment or labor rights and could appeal to international arbitration tribunals, which would be given the authority to override U.S. laws. Under the leaked TPP chapter on investment, foreign corporations could bypass domestic courts and laws and sue governments directly before a tribunal of lawyers operating under World Bank and United Nations (UN) rules. These corporate investors could demand compensation for any domestic law that they believe will reduce their expected future profits. Simply stated, the corporations will become more powerful than ever before.⁴

A U.S. environmental proposal was put on the table at the negotiating session in September 2011. It reportedly contains components on conservation, core commitments, and policies for environmental standards, but the exact details and current information are unavailable. TPP countries have not yet been able to agree on a set of policies for corporations to meet in relation to environmental standards. Environmental concerns are extremely important. As we now know, climate change is a very real threat with serious consequences for our health and our economy.

⁴ Center for Research on Globalization, “Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP): More Power to Corporations to Attack Nations,” 5 July 2012, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/trans-pacific-partnership-tpp-more-power-to-corporations-to-attack-nations/3176>

Additionally, the TPP could require the United States and other countries to import food that does not meet domestic safety standards. The United States could see a major increase of contaminated food imported from abroad. Currently, around ninety percent of the seafood consumed in the United States is imported. A study published in the *Journal of Food Protection* estimated that the economic loss due to food illnesses is around \$77 billion a year. This is with our current food safety standards!

Leaked documents also show that the U.S. Trade Representative is pressuring TPP countries to expand pharmaceutical monopoly protections. The TPP would extend patents beyond 20 years. Partner countries would also be forced to grant new patents for expired patented drugs that have been formulated in a new way or approved for a new set of patients. This would make it more difficult for cheaper generic drugs to be produced. Countries would also be allowed to patent diagnostic, therapeutic, and surgical methods of treatment. Our current law restricts the enforcement of surgical patents, as we do not want doctors wondering if they will be subjected to a patent infringement lawsuit every time they do surgery.

Sister and Brothers, TPP is yet another “back door” for corporations to gain more power by exploiting the American workforce, environment, and economy through low foreign wages, unrepresented workers, fewer regulations, and far less oversight and accountability. We must pressure the Obama administration to adopt practices that protect workers, consumers, and give us equal access to the negotiations. We must also pressure members of Congress to push for the adoption of good practices and policies. We must stand up and demand that our government protects hard working Americans and our jobs.

IMMIGRATION REFORM AND VOTER SUPPRESSION

Most immigrant workers come to this country with the goal of looking for better paying jobs, being able to provide for their families, and a better way of life. This is not much different than why we joined the CWA. Yet, most arrive with few resources and often find themselves confined to the bottom of the labor market, where wages are low, working conditions are poor, and benefits and opportunities for promotion are limited or nonexistent. Many face wage theft and low safety standards. Because predatory employers take advantage of undocumented workers, working standards for all citizens are lowered as well: male citizens saw a reduction in earnings of nearly four percent from 1980 to 2000 as the result of these practices.

Over the last few decades, the undocumented immigrant workforce grew steadily until the current economic downturn. It is difficult to imagine any scenario in which low-wage immigrants, including those who presently lack legal status,

cease to be a significant element in the U.S. labor market. Even among advocates of immigration restriction, few are proposing a wholesale expulsion of the estimated eleven million who currently lack legal status. Although the previous influx of unauthorized immigrants has come to a halt as a result of the economic crisis, the outflow has been exceedingly modest, and indeed the influx of *legal* immigrants has actually increased slightly since the recession began.

Some people in this room may believe the myths of undocumented immigrants:

They take our jobs – There has not been a single serious study that could prove this myth to be reality. Economists at Harvard University have concluded that illegal immigration has only caused a negligible reduction in the salaries of unqualified workers. Undocumented immigrants take on all the heaviest and most harmful work like harvesting fruits and vegetables treated with pesticides.

Undocumented immigrants do not want to study English – Data from the last census show only 2.5 percent of Spanish speaking residents do not speak English.

A fence along the border with Mexico will solve the problem – Even the far right understands that a wall is simply an obstacle, not a deterrent. The preservation of worker rights and protections in Mexico will keep far more from crossing the border than any wall ever will.

Undocumented immigrants take advantage of benefits – Undocumented immigrants pay exactly the same taxes as everyone else does: sales, income, Social Security, and property taxes in the form of rent. Undocumented immigrants bring almost \$50 billion annually to the American economy without receiving anything in return.

A range of efforts to win a path for legalization for undocumented immigrants has gradually grown across the country, with recent polls showing 71 percent of U.S. citizens in favor of a path to citizenship. After the re-election of President Obama, Republicans are said to be re-evaluating their stance on comprehensive immigration reform. Why? Because 1.3 million more Latinos voted in 2012 than in 2008.

While an estimated 12.5 million Latinos voted for President Obama last November, there were still 11.2 million more Latinos who were eligible, but chose to not vote. When you add the 5.4 million permanent residents who could not vote because they have not yet become naturalized U.S. citizens, combined with the 7.1 million unauthorized and the 17.6 million under the age of 18, the GOP knows that the only way to win in the future is to restrict the Latino vote.

Recent polls show that more than three in five union members are in favor of a comprehensive immigration reform proposal that includes a path to citizenship

and stops the exploitation of immigrant labor. The labor policy framework must include:

- a path to citizenship;
- an independent commission to assess labor market shortages;
- effective work authorization mechanisms to hold employers accountable;
- rational operational control of the border; and
- improvement, not expansion, of temporary worker programs.

Now is the time for the labor movement to work in coalitions so we can accomplish these goals.

If the Republicans cannot stop comprehensive immigration reform with a path to citizenship, they will continue to push voter suppression laws targeted at minorities – a group that traditionally votes overwhelmingly for Democrats. While little came of the efforts in the 2010 Election, there were renewed threats in 2012 by groups like “True The Vote.” This deceptively named extreme right wing group recruited and trained one million volunteers nationally to monitor the polls during the 2012 Elections with emphasis on suppression minded tactics such as:

Voter Challenges: Currently, 46 states permit political party representatives, or registered voters, to challenge a voter’s right to cast a ballot either on or prior to Election Day. This typically leads to an inquiry, which may result in the challenged voters losing their ability to cast ballots that will be counted.

Caging: This is a practice of sending mail marked “do not forward” to addresses found on voter rolls, compiling a list of mail that is returned to the sender as undeliverable, and then using that list to purge voter rolls or challenge the voters’ eligibility. Voter caging is a notoriously unreliable method of determining a voter’s eligibility. There are numerous reasons why a voter’s mail may be returned unopened even though the voter provided accurate information to elections officials.

Intimidation: This includes a wide range of conduct that has the effect of stopping voter participation. Today, voter intimidation usually takes more subtle forms, but it continues to primarily suppress the vote of racial and ethnic minorities.

Misinformation: These are collectively deceptive practices in which political groups or lone individuals acting anonymously engage in the dissemination of misleading information regarding the time, place, or manner of an election; identification requirements; voter eligibility; or the presence of activities of law enforcement near a polling site. They are usually aimed at suppressing the vote of racial and linguistic minorities, as well as the elderly and disabled.

The CWA Civil Rights and Equity Committee asks our sisters and brothers to support a comprehensive immigration reform plan that has a path to citizenship for the estimated eleven million undocumented workers in the U.S. We further ask that you help stop voter suppression by pressuring state legislatures to reduce voting restrictions and increase early voting and same day voter registration.

EDUCATING THE YOUTH

Proverbs 22:6: Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

If we are going to be successful in building a movement for economic justice and democracy, we must do a better job of assisting in the coordination of existing community programs and services that help minority youth. Recent U.S. Census Bureau projections indicate that by the middle of this century, Whites will cease to be a majority of the American population. For America's youngest residents, that future is already here. In 2010, 48.6 percent of the babies born in the United States were members of minority groups.

One thing is certain, corporate America is well aware of this phenomenon. Funding from corporations to institutions of higher education is up; corporate boards and college leadership overlap. One example is South Dakota State University, where the president of the university, Bruce Rastetter, is also co-founder and president of Agrisol Energy. He is also a member of the Iowa Board of Regents. Under his leadership, Iowa State and Agrisol partnered in a joint venture in Tanzania, which would have forcefully removed 162,000 people from their land!

The impact of corporate cash on our academic institutions will be disastrous in the United States and to the labor movement as well. President George Rupp of Columbia University has observed that as a result of corporate collusion with universities:

Research may become somewhat too domesticated, aimed at short-term objectives dictated by corporate sponsors, or even our own faculty, as their entrepreneurial instincts lead them to try to identify and patent discoveries that will have a payoff. That is a risk that the university as a whole faces. It can involve not only the sciences and engineering, but the humanities and social sciences as well. For example, consider the impact of some of the new media capabilities. There are current commercial attempts to harness the ideas, even the lectures and presentations, of faculty members. The danger exists that universities will be so assimilated into society that we will no longer be the kind of collectors of talent that allow creativity to blossom.

If these corporate bosses are allowed to dictate to the academia of this country, we will truly have lost not just the battle, but the war as well.

Another example is the work of David and Charles Koch, billionaire owners of a petrochemical empire. Their foundations donate to more than 150 universities and, in many of these donation contracts, the Kochs retain the ability to dictate curriculum and appoint faculty of their choosing. For example, at Florida State University, the Charles G. Koch Foundation gave \$1.5 million to the economics department. The agreement allowed him to appoint the committee that selected candidates to be considered for faculty positions. Additionally, he retained the right to withdraw funding if the foundation did not approve of the direction taken by the new hires. Contracts like these stifle academic freedom and promote ideology over academic rigor and evidence. This is at the expense of students, who instead of learning to be critical thinkers are indoctrinated into an ideology that often lacks a foundation in reality.

This is nothing less than a hijacking of education. And, who will suffer the most? It will be the minority youth of this country who still have substandard education at all levels, not the children of these fat cats who are destined to inherit the wealth of their forefathers.

We must fight back! And, we will. President Larry Cohen often states that the key to our future is building a movement. One of the most important components is building coalitions with the youth of our country, the future voters and leaders. We must reach out to all levels from kindergarten through the twelfth grade to community centers, community colleges, and major universities. We can do this by volunteering at our local schools and community centers, especially in minority and at-risk neighborhoods. If Locals would volunteer just one day a month, we can influence youth for a lifetime. Community colleges, where many minority students turn to due to financial constraints, are treasure troves where young people hungrily devour knowledge. They all have clubs and organizations that are eager to hear what we have to offer. We need to let them know about the opportunities that we have via scholarships. \$200 for a fat cat may not be much, but for a family in need it can make all the difference in the world.

Jesus prophesized in a parable by the lake, Matthew 13:3:

A sower went out to sow and as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear.

And, just as the sower required good soil for his seeds to produce grain, we must lay the foundation for our youth to thrive. We cannot wait while others lay out an ideology that benefits the few at the expense of all others. We cannot allow our children to be manipulated by the wealth of the top while their own interests are undermined and impeded. We must lay the groundwork for the future.

Respectfully submitted,

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