



September 2011 Press Clips

Connecticut

Unions say utility workforce cuts imperil prompt power restoration

CTPost.com

September 1, 2011

Unions that work for the state's electric utilities said systematic reductions in line workers over a number of years at Connecticut Light & Power and the United Illuminating Co. have finally caught up with the companies.

The companies have been slow to restore power to hundreds of thousands of customers because reduced work forces can't be supplemented adequately with mutual-assistance crews from other states, union officials said.

Tom Swan, executive director of the nonprofit **Connecticut Citizen Action Group**, a consumer advocate, said the 1998 legislation is responsible for worker attrition. "We don't have the means to hold accountable the utilities to make sure we have the number of linesmen we need. ..," he said.

<http://www.ctpost.com/news/article/Unions-say-utility-workforce-cuts-imperil-prompt-2149854.php#ixzz1XwPZ7uU4>

With his administration complete, Malloy feels 'liberated'

The CT Mirror

September 8, 2011

Gov. Dannel P. Malloy reached a milestone this week: With another in a series of "outside-the-box" appointments--an education commissioner from outside the ranks of educators--his administration essentially is complete.

"He's gone out of his way to keep business happy," said Tom Swan, executive director of the **Connecticut Citizen Action Group**. "Time will tell how that works for the state."

<http://www.ctmirror.org/story/13847/his-administratio-complete-malloy-feels-liberated>

Unions, Advocacy Group Support Drew for Mayor

The Middletown Patch
September 13, 2011

Dan Drew, Democratic candidate for mayor of Middletown, was endorsed Monday by the **Connecticut Citizen Action Group** and SEIU Locals 511 and 506 and CWA Local 1298.

"CCAG has worked on behalf of all citizens for the past four decades. I want to bring responsive city government to Middletown, and I'm proud to have earned this support."

"The Connecticut Citizen Action Group endorses Dan Drew for mayor because it is time to restore honesty and integrity to Middletown's municipal government," said CCAG political director John Murphy.

"Dan Drew is committed to open, honest and transparent city government. CCAG has a 40-year track record of fighting for open and honest government, and we know that Dan is the change Middletown needs. His commitment to preservation, open space, public education and saving our middle class will move the city forward."

<http://www.ctpost.com/news/article/Unions-say-utility-workforce-cuts-imperil-prompt-2149854.php#ixzz1XwPZ7uU4>

A rookie insurance commissioner plays on a global stage

The CT Mirror
September 8, 2011

Thomas B. Leonardi, a venture capitalist who was Gov. Dannel P. Malloy's surprise choice as insurance commissioner in February, has forcefully jumped into an international debate over regulation of global financial-services companies sparked by the 2008 financial crisis.

With the governor's strong backing, Leonardi has become a voice of caution against what he says is a rush towards a one-size-fits-all regulatory model that could disadvantage U.S. insurers in global markets. In defending U.S. regulators, he also is defending a system familiar to domestic insurers.

Tom Swan, the executive director of the **Connecticut Citizen Action Group**, applauded Leonardi for his strong stance on the brokers' fee issue, but he sees the administration as too concerned about the health of the industry.

"I think the consumer continues to take a secondary role in the insurance department," Swan said. "I thought they were little quick to say how great the insurance companies were in responding to Irene. The giveaway to CIGNA, I think, is outrageous."

Swan criticized Malloy for vetoing a bill that would have required greater state oversight of health insurance rate hikes, but other consumer advocates credited Leonardi with resurrecting portions of the bill by pledging to hold public hearings on certain types of rate increases.

<http://www.ctmirror.org/story/13847/his-administratio-complete-malloy-feels-liberated>

Idaho – United Vision for Idaho in the News

Don't raise Social Security retirement age

Idaho Press-Tribune
September 2, 2011

You may have heard the casualty reports from today's economy. Almost 14 million Americans are out of work and 25 million Americans are un- or under-employed. These casualty reports are grim, but they are not equally grim for everyone. One of the groups hardest hit by what some are calling the "new normal" are elderly Americans.

And now these very same Americans, most of whom have worked nearly all of their adult lives and have had payroll taxes taken out of every single paycheck, face a new threat: Some are talking about raising the retirement age for receiving full Social Security benefits from 67 to 69.

The sad state of today's economy means that many older workers cannot find work. In 2009, one year after the economic meltdown began, nearly three out of every four new retirees – 2 million out of 2.7 million Americans – claimed retirement benefits early, resulting in a permanent benefit reduction of as much as 25 percent.

Many of these two million Americans retired early because they had no choice. They may have been laid off and are unlikely to find new jobs. They may have health and physical challenges. And they may face age discrimination, often because older workers cost employers more.

Many older workers have little likelihood of getting back into the workforce, whether the retirement age is 67 or 69, but they should not be penalized for their lack of options.

Raising the retirement age from 67 to 69 represents a 13 percent cut in Social Security benefits for those affected. And this would come after we already have raised the retirement age from 65 to 67 for those born after 1960. Not only would this cut create increased hardship for unemployed seniors, it's a broken promise.

What is the promise of Social Security? Social Security is a uniquely and profoundly American program and it represents a profoundly patriotic value. It is a social contract, a promise we make to each other that when you grow old or if you are hurt or if your parent or spouse dies suddenly, you are not alone. We will care for you.

And this isn't a government giveaway. Remember, we all pay into Social Security every time we receive a paycheck.

Social Security keeps 13 million elderly Americans out of poverty. It helps pay the utility bill and put food on the table. And it's not making anyone rich — the average retiree receives less than \$14,000 a year from Social Security, which is less than full-

time minimum wage work. Still, for many, Social Security represents the line of demarcation between sustainability and abject poverty.

It is important to remember the principles upon which this promise to America was founded. Social Security belongs to the workers and their families who have worked hard, paid taxes in and earned its benefits. Social Security did not cause the federal deficit, and its benefits should not be used to reduce the deficit.

Unfortunately, from time to time, some people forget the promise we made when we first created Social Security as part of FDR's New Deal. Now, with the economy struggling and many elderly workers suffering, it's a good time for all of us to renew our vows. Let us say with pride that when it comes to Social Security, we make a promise to America. And we kept it.

Adrienne Evans is executive director [United Vision for Idaho](#).

http://www.idahopress.com/opinion/bestread/don-t-raise-social-security-retirement-age/article_38315ed4-d51f-11e0-8b95-001cc4c002e0.html

Find a real deficit solution; leave Social Security alone

Idaho Statesman
September 21, 2011

My blood boils when I hear talk blaming Social Security for the country's economic mess. This is out of line. Social Security keeps our country running and millions of people afloat. Washington should look in the mirror and see how they caused the deficit: tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations, corporate subsidies and two costly wars.

I've been going to work every day for the past 15 years. As a single mother of two small children, my monthly expenses are stretched to the limit. Between my rent, child care expenses, monthly living and medical expenses and trying to just get by, there is hardly any money left at the end of each month.

I am thankful for Social Security to protect my family. I know that if anything happens to me, my children are taken care of. I know that my parents are able to enjoy spending time with their grandchildren (and helping me out weekly with child care) because of their Social Security check every month.

Let's find a real solution to the deficit and leave Social Security to the hard-working people in America! We pay special taxes for these benefits. The money belongs to us.

Written by ARIS DUNCAN, A member of [United Vision for Idaho](#)

<http://www.idahostatesman.com/2011/09/21/1807117/letters-to-the-editor.html#ixzz1ZqzZVhjI>

Maine – [Maine People's Alliance in the News](#)

Flurry of justification

Sun Journal
September 7, 2011

If this wasn't such a serious issue, it could be considered downright comical to witness the flurry of recent letters and op-ed pieces to local newspapers by various legislative representatives trying to justify their votes to eliminate same-day voter registration, in light of the soon-to-be certified signatures gathered by the **Maine People's Alliance** to bring this issue before Maine voters on the ballot in November.

They're running scared, as they should be, considering more than enough valid signatures were collected and done so more quickly than has ever been done before by a grassroots campaign in Maine. This makes it clear that those who voted to do away with same-day voter registration are seriously out of touch with where everyday Maine citizens are on this issue.

<http://www.sunjournal.com/letters/story/1084174>

Voter registration challenge allowed to proceed

Chron.com
September 8, 2011

Maine election officials determined Thursday that enough voters' signatures have been submitted to force a "people's veto" referendum this November on whether to restore a law that allows voter registration on election day.

Secretary of State Charlie Summers said 70,308 of the submitted signatures are valid, surpassing the required minimum number by roughly 13,000 and setting the stage for a statewide vote on the issue.

Jesse Graham of the **Maine People's Alliance**, a coalition member, dismissed claims by repeal opponents which he said are "based on fear and division." Graham predicted his side, which collected more than 70,000 signatures in a month, will flex the same organizational muscle to win over voters in November.

<http://www.chron.com/news/article/Voter-registration-challenge-allowed-to-proceed-2160500.php>

New Maine political map elusive as session nears

Chron.com
September 26, 2011

Democratic state lawmakers sought to pressure Republicans to support a compromise on a new congressional map Monday, a day before a special legislative session to take up the issue. But even as negotiations lumbered along, key lawmakers acknowledged that the matter could wind up back in the courts.

The Maine People's Alliance, which usually sides with Democrats, e-mailed its own warning of a GOP plan to "radically redraw the Congressional districts in Maine, moving 360,000 Maine people, seven counties, and 139 municipalities from one district to another." It too asked recipients to call their legislators.

<http://www.chron.com/news/article/New-Maine-political-map-elusive-as-session-nears-2188793.php>

Michigan

Price tag law is off books in Michigan

Detroit Free Press
September 1, 2011

Michigan says goodbye to an old friend today -- one, who in the view of many, overstayed his welcome -- the ubiquitous item price sticker. A 33-year-old requirement that almost everything sold in the state be adorned with an individual price tag ends today, the result of legislation passed early this year at the urging of Gov. Rick Snyder.

Opponents of repeal, who were bowled over by the passage of Snyder's first major initiative, said it remains to be seen whether savings will be passed on to consumers.

"It will take awhile for consumers to get used to it and to see how the stores deal with it," said Linda Teeter, executive director of the group **Michigan Citizen Action**.

"There will be confusion, and people will say, 'Why is this happening?' "

<http://www.freep.com/article/20110901/BUSINESS06/109010502/Price-tag-law-off-books-Michigan>

Group Sends Feedback to Upton

WKZO
September 28, 2011

About three dozen people turned out at an unofficial public hearing at the Kalamazoo Public Library downtown to talk about the federal deficit Monday night.

Two political action groups [including **Michigan Citizen Action**] wanted to send a message to Congressman Fred Upton, who says he wants input as he works with the Deficit Reduction Supercommittee.

The speakers demanded they keep their hands off union benefits, social security and Medicare.

They video taped it and will send it to Rep. Upton, who did not make the session.

<http://wkzo.com/news/articles/2011/sep/27/group-sends-feedback-to-upton/>

New Jersey – [New Jersey Citizen Action in the News](#)

Little-known state government office saves New Jerseyans from higher utility rates

Nj.com
September 19, 2011

Electricity rates in New Jersey are among the highest in the nation, but they'd be even higher if it weren't for Stefanie Brand.

Brand is the head of the Division of Rate Counsel, a little-known office of state government that fights rate increase requests when they come before the Board of Public Utilities, typically cutting them by about 40 percent through research, opposition before the BPU and negotiation, according to Brand.

In a recent PSE&G case, that meant a rate increase was knocked down to \$100 million from more than \$200 million, Brand said.

That case and others have impressed other public advocates like Phyllis Salowe-Kaye, executive director of [New Jersey Citizen Action](#).

"We think she has represented New Jersey consumers well," Salowe-Kaye said. "She does see both sides, but she's there to represent the ratepayers."

http://www.nj.com/business/index.ssf/2011/09/little-known_state_government.html

NJ insurance industry performed well post-Irene, state says

Nj.com

September 25, 2011

Nearly a month after Hurricane Irene struck New Jersey, the state's Department of Banking and Insurance has given the insurance industry mostly clean marks for its response to the storm.

The agency, which monitors the insurance industry's compliance with state regulations, has found that carriers have abided by its orders to mobilize disaster response plans ahead of the storm and suspend so-called hurricane deductibles after it passed. So far, DOBI has fielded fewer than 50 written complaints about insurance claims related to the storm, mostly due to delayed or denied claims, said Marshall McKnight, a spokesman for the department. "The relatively few complaints we've seen so far seems to reflect that [insurance carriers and agents] are doing their jobs," he said

Some homeowners who have refinanced in recent years also may have let their flood coverage lapse if their new mortgage holder no longer required them to hold such a policy, said Phyllis Salowe-Kaye, executive director of [New Jersey Citizen Action](#). Those living in foreclosed properties also could be facing uncertainty as it may not be clear if the bank taking over the property has also taken over making insurance payments, she added.

http://www.nj.com/business/index.ssf/2011/09/nj_insurance_industry_performe.html

Higher bank fees spur anxiety for poor, unbanked

The Republic

September 26, 2011

For 20 years, New Jersey has required that banks offer a \$3 a month, \$1 minimum balance account so the poor — who have increased in number — can have affordable banking services. Yet national banks ignore the mandate because the U.S. Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, a federal regulator, issued an opinion in the 1990s that the law doesn't apply to federally chartered banks.

Now some of the big national banks are raising monthly checking account fees to \$10 or more and consumer advocates are increasingly concerned about the burden that will place on poor people who cannot get fees waived by maintaining large balances or by using online banking, because they don't have computers.

"I think (fee increases) will increase the number of unbanked people we have in New Jersey," said Phyllis Salowe-Kaye, executive director of **New Jersey Citizen Action**. "This is not the group of people that they should be looking to make money from."

She and other consumer advocates are encouraging people to switch to community banks and credit unions, which still offer free checking.

"Big banks are raising fees but small banks and credit unions are not," Salowe-Kaye said.

http://www.therepublic.com/view/story/PFP-CHECKINGFEES_6134836/PFP-CHECKINGFEES_6134836/

Consumer anger mounts over debit card charges

The Tennessean
September 27, 2011

Regions and SunTrust banks are among the first in Middle Tennessee to unveil monthly checking account fees as regulations threaten to slice bank profits from debit cards.

SunTrust Bank will charge a \$5-a-month fee for debit card purchases, and Regions Bank will charge a \$4-a-month fee for debit card purchases (ATM withdrawals and deposits are still free).

Some national consumer advocates also argue that the higher fees will swell the ranks of the unbanked, those without checking accounts at all.

"I think (fee increases) will increase the number of unbanked people we have," said Phyllis Salowe-Kaye, executive director of **New Jersey Citizen Action**. "This is not the group of people that they (bankers) should be looking to make money from."

http://www.nj.com/business/index.ssf/2011/09/little-known_state_government.html

New York – [Citizen Action New York in the News](#)

Binghamton City Council Members Set to Vote on Resolution to Divest With JP Morgan Chase

ABC 34
September 20, 2011

From Citizen Action of New York:

The Binghamton City Council is scheduled to vote on a resolution that calls for the divestment of three of its accounts with JP Morgan Chase as part of a statewide campaign to fight foreclosures organized by **Citizen Action** and New York Communities for Change. A study done by New York Communities for Change showed that Chase has only modified 6 percent of loans for New York homeowners who sought help. In addition, Binghamton homeowners in 2007 had 50% chance of receiving a subprime from Chase, compared to the average of 28%. Members of the City Council are using their power with taxpayers' money to hold institutions accountable for the foreclosure and economic crises, as well as for their bad record modifying loans to help homeowners.

This is one of several resolutions Citizen Action and New York Communities for Change has introduced across the state. The first was the Village of Hempstead in Long Island, which pulled \$12.5 million dollars from JP Morgan Chase. Hempstead's action inspired the Village of Freeport to divest their money from Chase. Albany County followed with their own divestment proclamation in May 2011 with 25 County Legislators signing on, and the Ithaca Town Board has just recently passed a resolution to not bond with JP Morgan Chase.

"We are pleased that City Council today is creatively using our public dollars to help local homeowners by encouraging banks to improve their loan modification processes. Loan Modifications prevents foreclosures and allows people who have fallen on hard times to be able to stay in their homes. Reducing the number of foreclosures in a community prevents all homeowners from losing property value, it also grows and stabilizes our overall tax base" said Mary Clark Regional Director Citizen Action of NY

"We are happy to work with a progressive community like the City of Binghamton who is taking a stand with us," said Jean Sassine – NYCC Board Member and Chase homeowner. "It is important that Chase and others work with homeowners to create permanent affordable mortgage modifications."

<http://www.newschannel34.com/content/developingnews/story/Binghamton-City-Council-Members-Set-to-Vote-on/ecWqvBIU5UOV6x34qQJLbA.csp>

Schneiderman's Voice Needed in Foreclosure Talks

Gotham Gazette

September 16, 2011

It was not all that long ago when the conventional wisdom among America's working families was that owning a home provided the key to economic security and a life of prosperity. But now, too many families across New York and America live in fear of foreclosure. Since 2007, nearly 8 million homes have entered a foreclosure process.

We can't forget that this situation was not a sudden, unexpected disaster. It was not inevitable. Instead America's mortgage crisis was the direct result of the greedy, immoral and possibly illegal actions by the largest mortgage banks. These companies intentionally pillaged the assets of working families to enhance their own profits, with no regard for the broader good of our communities or our economy.

In order for the American economy to recover and for working families to get back on their feet, two things must happen. First, real relief must be provided to those who predatory mortgage banks preyed upon. Second, those responsible for the mortgage crisis must be held accountable.

As has been widely reported in the press, New York's attorney general, Eric Schneiderman, has been removed from a committee of state attorneys general that the Obama administration convened to take enforcement action against mortgage servicers. The settlement that this committee is close to reaching with the banks -- a settlement supported by many powerful Washington politicians, including Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner -- would require the banks to pay up to \$20 billion. In return, though, the banks would be immune from further prosecution.

Schneiderman's Stand

By standing against this settlement and ensuring that he can complete his own comprehensive investigation into the fraud and abuse that these banks perpetrated against the public, Schneiderman is doing exactly what we elected him to do: fighting for justice.

This settlement is a bad deal for New Yorkers. Amnesty for those banks that acted with the most egregious depravity will do absolutely nothing to prevent them from acting the same way again. America can no longer trust massive corporations to police their own practices, especially when they have made skyrocketing profits just two years after enjoying billions in taxpayer bailouts. There is no doubt -- no question -- that these very same banks are responsible for the recession that still grips many of New York's working families. The CEOs of these banks have not even gotten a taste of the economic calamity that they have caused.

Having a Say

New York deserves a seat at the table when it comes to ensuring that a fair settlement is reached. In fact, according to the FBI, New York was among the top 10 states for known or suspected mortgage fraud. Since this story broke, over 1,600 New Yorkers have signed Citizen Action's petition in support of Schneiderman's pursuit of justice.

Some (ahem -- the New York Post) have argued that if the banks had not proceeded with so many foreclosures, thereby reducing their risk of financial losses, then those banks would have been hesitant to issue more mortgages. While it may be true that banks are not usually willing to take risks unless they have a scheme to ensure their financial success, I think that we can all reach for a higher standard for our corporations.

Schneiderman is seeking a full investigation, a reasonable (i.e., more than \$20 billion) settlement and the ability to continue to prosecute illegal activity as it is discovered. Without that kind of approach we will no doubt be in the same situation once again. With it, we can have a society where lenders act responsibly and working families can get the loans they need to build their futures.

For far too long, those who have been elected to represent us in government have coddled the super-wealthy while leaving working families to foot the tab. It's time for our government to protect those who elect them -- not just those who finance their elections. We believe that if justice is achieved, then everyone will be better off. America needs more elected officials like Schneiderman - willing to stand up to the most powerful special interests in the pursuit of justice.

Karen Scharff is executive director of [Citizen Action of New York](#).

<http://www.gothamgazette.com/article/comm/20110916/212/3604>

City schools' meeting today to protest state aid cuts

poughkeepsiejournal.com

September 21, 2011

Poughkeepsie City School District officials will hold a special meeting today, part of a statewide effort to highlight the impact of cuts in state education aid on students.

Meetings like today's in Poughkeepsie, and other events, are being held across the state as part of the School Cuts Hurt campaign by the nonprofits Alliance for Quality Education and [Citizen Action of New York](#). Similar events are planned in Albany, Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse.

<http://www.newschannel34.com/content/developingnews/story/Binghamton-City-Council-Members-Set-to-Vote-on/ecWqvBIU5UOV6x34qQJLbA.cspX>

Ohio

Ohio Selling Its Lake Erie Prison to CCA, Hiring Company to Run Two Others

Bloomberg

September 1, 2011

The state [Ohio] will sell the Lake Erie Correctional Institution in Ashtabula County to Nashville-based CCA, the Rehabilitation and Correction Department said in a release today. It will hire Management & Training Corp. of Centerville, Utah, to run two facilities in Marion. Ohio also will combine state and privately run prisons to create one government-operated complex in Lorain County, the department said.

The sale is not a done deal because a lawsuit against the state is proceeding, Brian Rothenberg, [ProgressOhio](#) executive director, said in a telephone interview from Columbus.

Selling prisons violates the state constitution because the authorization was included in the budget, and the right for citizens to seek a referendum on the matter was denied as a result, ProgressOhio said in its lawsuit.

Judge Patrick E. Sheeran of Franklin County Common Pleas Court yesterday declined to block the sale, though he did say the referendum argument "appears to have merit." He scheduled a hearing Sept. 13 in Columbus.

Carlo LoParo, a spokesman for the Rehabilitation and Correction Department, said the agency's process is sound and "we're confident that it'll ultimately be upheld."

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-09-01/ohio-will-sell-lake-erie-prison-hire-outsiders-to-run-two-units-in-marion.html>

Ohio 'ONE Fund' entrepreneurs make pitches to angel, venture capital investors

The Examiner

September 1, 2011

JobsOhio, Republican Gov. John Kasich's private, non-profit entity that has displaced the Ohio Dept. of Development - now known as the Development Services Agency following recently completed reforms by the Ohio legislature at the behest of Kasich - as the state's job creation group, has sparked controversy from the day it Kasich launched the idea during his race for governor last year.

Critics of Kasich's plan to privatize what hitherto had been a public effort, led by Democratic state lawmakers with the help of the determined progressive advocacy group **ProgressOhio**, say its unconstitutional and that Kasich and the newly formed JobsOhio, Inc. should be declared void. The plaintiffs - Democrats State Sen. Michael Skindell, State Rep. Dennis Murray and ProgressOhio - who refiled a lawsuit against JobsOhio in Franklin County Common Pleas Court following a ruling by the Supreme Court that it couldn't hear the case, are expected to argue that JobsOhio cannot invest in private companies and that the General Assembly cannot pass a bill granting special corporate powers.

Kvamme, a long-time friend and campaign contributor to Kasich, who's been steadfast in his philosophy that the so-called market knows best and that government is generally slow, plodding and bureaucratic, has trumpeted the notion that government should get out of the way of the private sector so it can do what it does best, namely, create jobs and grow wealth.

<http://www.examiner.com/government-in-columbus/ohio-one-fund-entrepreneurs-make-pitches-to-angel-venture-capital-investors>

General election early voting date unclear

NewsandSentinal.com

September 2, 2011

When, exactly, will Washington County voters be able to start early voting for this year's general election?

That's the question boards of elections officials across the state are asking as they await the outcome of a challenge to new election legislation approved by the Ohio General Assembly this year.

Amended Substitute House Bill 194, signed by Gov. John Kasich in June, would overhaul the state's current election law, including, among other changes, the date when voters can begin casting absentee ballots.

But former Ohio Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner, working with political action group [ProgressOhio](#), is attempting to petition the new legislation to the 2012 general election ballot.

The group's bid to proceed with the petition was approved by Ohio Secretary of State John Husted Aug. 19.

"If we can file a petition with 241,000 valid signatures by Sept. 29, the new law would be staid until the November 2012 general election," said Brian Rosenthal, executive director of ProgressOhio.

That means the current election law would stand until voters make their decision next year.

The petition has to be filed by midnight Sept. 29 because the new election legislation becomes effective on Sept. 30, according to Matt McClellan, press secretary for Husted's office.

<http://www.newsandsentinel.com/page/content.detail/id/551609/General-election-early-voting-date-unclear.html?nav=5061>

JobsOhio gets \$1.6 million for Appalachia

Chillicothe Gazette
September 2, 2011

A new, private entity set to take the place of state economic development offices will get \$1.6 million in state funds during its first year representing 25 Appalachian counties.

The money is part of a \$14.8 million investment statewide made through the Third Frontier Program, which awarded funding for economic development entities representing six Ohio regions. This week, the Ohio Department of Development announced the Third Frontier program will provide \$1.6 million to the newly formed Ohio Appalachian Business Council, headquartered in Nelsonville and serving 25 Appalachian counties that include Ross and Pike.

But not everyone is on board with the idea. Two state lawmakers, along with [ProgressOhio.org](#), have refiled a constitutional challenge against the law that created JobsOhio arguing it violates the Ohio State Constitution. According to the Associated Press, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled this past week that it was the wrong court in which to file the complaint, originally brought by Sen. Mike Skindell, Rep. Dennis Murray and ProgressOhio.org. The trio have refiled in Franklin County Common Pleas Court. They've argued it's illegal for JobsOhio to invest state money in private companies. Both JobsOhio and the Ohio Third Frontier Program are funded with taxpayer dollars.

"Everyone agrees that Ohio should be doing whatever we can do to legally bring more jobs to Ohio, but the governor and the Legislature must work within the bounds of the Constitution," said Brian Rothenberg, of Progress Ohio, on the ProgressOhio.org website. "These Constitutional restrictions are there to protect the public's money and the public's trust and are not optional. It's unfortunate that we

must continually file legal actions to keep the governor honest, but if this is what it takes to protect the citizens of Ohio and their tax dollars, so be it."

<http://www.chillicothe Gazette.com/article/20110902/NEWS01/109020303/JobsOhio-gets-1-6-million-Appalachia?odyssey=tab|topnews|text|Frontpage>

Chabot camera seizure irks right and left

Cincinnati.com

September 2, 2011

Steven Chabot's staff had asked for a Cincinnati police officer to be present - because, as a Chabot staff member explained, House Sergeant at Arms had suggested House member coordinate security with local law enforcement when House members held public events.

Chabot's people had put up signs on the door saying no cameras allowed, although at least two media outlets were there videotaping and taking photographs.

At some point during the hour-long session, a Chabot staffer asked the police officer to seize the cameras of two Democratic activists - an iPhone owned by David Little of **ProgressOhio**, a liberal organization; and a video camera set on a stand by Liz Ping, a former Democratic state legislative candidate who was videotaping Chabot for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

<http://communitypress.cincinnati.com/article/AB/20110902/NEWS0108/109040308/Wilkinson-Chabot-camera-seizure-irks-right-left?odyssey=mod|newswell|text|communities|s>

Workers Challenge Ohio's Sale of Prisons

Courthouse News Service

September 16, 2011

Seven state prison workers and **ProgressOhio.org** asked a state judge to stop Ohio from enforcing a law that "purports to authorize the sale of state-owned prisons to private contractors."

Lead plaintiff ProgressOhio claims Gov. John Kasich's attempted sale of five state prisons is "a radical departure from the status quo" and the House Bill 153, which authorized it, is unconstitutional.

In its complaint in Franklin County Court, ProgressOhio.org describes itself as a 501(c)(4) organization that "seeks to inform and educate the public about progressive ideals, values and politics in order to provide a more just and democratic society."

It claims HB 153 violates the Ohio Constitution's single-subject rule, and will violate the section of the state constitution that prohibits "joining public and private property rights."

<http://www.courthousenews.com/2011/09/16/39822.htm>

Officer who confiscated cameras at Chabot event gets “administrative insight.”

Cincinnati.com

September 20, 2011

A five-year member of the Cincinnati Police Department who confiscated the video cameras who were taping Rep. Steve Chabot’s North Avondale town hall meeting Aug. 22 has been told by his supervisor that his action was wrong, according to a police department spokeswoman.

The Cincinnati Police Department sent Officer Tyrone Hall to the event at the North Avondale Recreation Center after Chabot’s office had asked for police presence at the event, which drew about 100 people.

Hall, at the request of a Chabot staff member, confiscated video cameras of David Little of [ProgressOhio](#), a liberal group; and Liz Ping, who was videotaping the event for the Democratic National Campaign Committee.

The police department spokeswoman said Hall was not disciplined for taking the cameras, which were returned to their owners after the meeting. He was given an “administrative insight” in which his supervisor talked to him and told him that was not the proper procedure. Documentation of the meeting was placed in the officer’s personnel file, said police department spokeswoman Fran Cihon.

A week after the North Avondale event, a Chabot town hall meeting was held at the Westwood Town Hall, where Chabot staffers told the audience they were free to videotape the event.

<http://www.examiner.com/government-in-columbus/ohio-one-fund-entrepreneurs-make-pitches-to-angel-venture-capital-investors>

Ohio Joins States Letting Voters Weigh In on Obama’s Health Law

Bloomberg

September 23, 2011

As legal challenges to President Barack Obama’s health-care overhaul proceed to a decisive U.S. Supreme Court battle, state ballot boxes are becoming skirmishing grounds in efforts to impede the law.

Ohio voters on Nov. 8 will decide an amendment to their constitution aimed at undercutting the federal Affordable Care Act, joining four states that considered similar measures last year and four slated to vote next year, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Voters nationwide next year will consider the most ballot measures in more than a decade seeking to overturn laws passed by their legislators.

In Ohio, voters will also consider a separate referendum Nov. 8 on a law passed this year limiting collective bargaining for public employees. The Ohio Republican Party helped Ohioans for Healthcare Freedom, a Tea Party-affiliated group, gather 426,998

valid signatures to put the amendment on the ballot after supporters failed to collect enough in 2010.

The Republican Party's goal was in part to attract voters who also would support the union-bargaining law referendum, said Brian Rothenberg, executive director or **ProgressOhio**, a Columbus nonprofit group that describes itself as a "progressive voice for Ohio citizens."

"They probably look at this as a voter-turnout vehicle," said Rothenberg, whose group sued unsuccessfully to keep the health-care issue off the ballot.

<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-09-23/ohio-joins-states-letting-voters-weigh-in-on-obama-s-health-law.html>

Pennsylvania

Postal workers rally to thank Fitzpatrick

Phillyburbs.com

September 28, 2011

Penn Action supported this rally in solidarity with the Postal Workers

Dozens of postal workers and supporters rallied in front of the office of Congressman Mike Fitzpatrick, R-8, Tuesday afternoon and thanked him for supporting a bill they say will save the country's postal service.

As one of 492 rallies nationwide scheduled for Tuesday, the rally attracted about 60 people to the parking lot of the congressman's Middletown office. Earlier in the day, the workers rallied outside the Frankford Avenue office of Congresswoman Allyson Schwartz, D-13, in Philadelphia.

Fitzpatrick and Schwartz are two of 216 co-sponsors of a bill by Rep. Stephen Lynch, D-Mass, that an American Postal Workers Union Local 7048 official said will "put the postal service back on a sound financial footing."

H.R. 1351 will allow the U.S. Postal Service to use billions of dollars from an overfunded federal retirement fund and use it to pay off a \$5.5 billion debt obligation.

A 2006 law passed by Congress mandates the postal service "pre-fund" 75 years of future employee retirement benefits over 10 years — that translates to \$5.5 billion annually.

http://www.phillyburbs.com/my_town/langhorne/postal-workers-rally-to-thank-fitzpatrick/article_c7d5783e-8db0-54f5-9099-073d8d7803d4.html

Rhode Island

Taxes On The Rise: Cities And Towns Ignore State Law

GoLocalProv.com

September 2, 2011

Nearly two dozen cities and towns from across the state have sought waivers from the state to exceed the property tax cap since 2009, a GoLocalProv review of municipal finances shows.

The General Assembly enacted the law in 2006 with the hopes of slashing the maximum property tax levy from 5.5 percent in fiscal year 2008 down to 4 percent by fiscal year 2013.

But the recessions, cuts in state aid to cities and towns and questionable fiscal decisions have led some municipalities to attempt to ignore the law and raise taxes beyond the cap. In some cases, communities have attempted to exceed the cap more than once over the past four years

But Kate Brock, Executive Director of **Ocean State Action**, said cuts in state aid to cities and towns are the real reason to blame for the need to constantly raise property taxes.

Brock said this is a prime example of why the state needs to end tax breaks for the wealthy.

"The state has drastically cut aid to cities and towns over the past decade in order to pay for misguided policies like tax breaks for the wealthy," she said. "This forces cities and towns to hike regressive property taxes that hit middle and working class families the hardest in order to pay for critical services that we all depend on. We need to get our priorities right as a state and that means ending tax breaks for the wealthy and increasing state aid to cities and towns."

<http://www.golocalprov.com/news/tax-cap/>

Board Of Governors Unanimously Approves In-State Tuition For Illegal Immigrants

GoLocalProv.com

September 27, 2011

Following hours of testimony on both sides of the issue, the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education Monday voted unanimously to offer undocumented students in-state tuition at the state's public university and colleges.

The measure, which takes effect in 2012, requires students to attend Rhode Island high schools for at least three years and ensures that they will have to commit to seeking legal status as soon as become eligible.

Supporters say the plan will improve the quality of Rhode Island's workforce, which has been called into question over the past year. Kate Brock, Executive Director of **Ocean State Action**, said the plan rectifies a great injustice to Rhode Island youth.

"Undocumented students who came here through no fault of their own should not be denied the same access higher education that is extended to their peers and classmates," Brock said. "I applaud the members of the Board of Governors for taking up this measure to provide in-state tuition to all Rhode Island students. Making college affordable for undocumented students who have done the right thing,

studied hard and excelled academically will improve the quality of our workforce and lives and rectify a great injustice for Rhode Island youth.”

<http://www.golocalprov.com/news/tax-cap/>

Groups Call On Senator Reed To Support Respect for Marriage Act

GoLocalProv.com
September 28, 2011

Marriage Equality Rhode Island (MERI) and **Ocean State Action** have partnered with two national organizations to urge Rhode Island Senator Jack Reed to sign on as a cosponsor of the Respect for Marriage Act, a bill that, if passed, would overturn the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA).

MERI and Ocean State Action have joined forces with national marriage equality campaign Freedom to Marry and online grassroots organizing platform Courage Campaign in an effort to “[reach] out to Rhode Islanders to make sure that Senator Reed hears from his constituents who want him to join in support of the Respect for Marriage Act,” according to Marc Solomon, National Campaign Director of Freedom to Marry.

The proposed Respect for Marriage bill would allow the federal government to provide benefits to couples in same-sex marriages. Reed is the only member of the Rhode Island Congressional delegation who has yet to cosponsor the bill.

<http://www.golocalprov.com/news/new-groups-call-on-senator-reed-to-support-respect-for-marriage-act/>

Political Roundtable examines a controversial tuition policy

Rhode Island Public Radio
September 30, 2011

PROVIDENCE, RI (WRNI) - In-state tuition for undocumented students, and the GOP primary heats up in the first congressional district. That's part of the discussion this week on Political Roundtable with our special guest Kate Brock, executive director of **Ocean State Action**. [AUDIO ARTICLE]

<http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/wrni/news.newsmain/article/0/13/1858503/Top.Stories/Political.Roundtable.examines.a.controversial.tuition.policy>

Tennessee

Tennessee voter ID law awaits effect on seniors

The Tennessean
September 28, 2011

A new Tennessee law requiring voters to show photo identification at polling stations may hinge on whether it discourages voting by the elderly.

State officials are launching an intense campaign this fall to teach hundreds of thousands of senior citizens about the new voter identification law that goes into effect just in time for next year's presidential campaign. The outreach campaign is meant to keep voters — especially the 230,000 Tennesseans older than 60 whose driver's licenses do not have their pictures on them — from being turned away at the polls for lack of identification.

Mary Mancini, executive director of **Tennessee Citizen Action**, which has campaigned against the law, said such situations are more common than state officials acknowledge.

"I think we're going to find that there are a lot of those people that don't have the means or the opportunity to make that trip back to the DMV," she said.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20110928/NEWS0201/309280086/Tennessee-voter-ID-law-awaits-effect-seniors?odyssey=tab|topnews|text|FRONTPAGE>

Virginia – Virginia Organizing in the News

About 200 rally outside Cantor event in Midlothian

WSLS 10

September 1, 2011

About 200 people rallied outside the Holiday Inn Koger Center in Midlothian on Wednesday evening where House Majority Leader Eric Cantor held a meeting of his advisory council.

The protesters chanted and held signs asking Cantor about job creation, with messages such as "I Need a Job to Pay My Bills" and "Whose Side Are You On?" Lynn West of Glen Allen held a sign that said: "Cantor — Owned By the U.S Corpratocracy."

"He's owned by the big businesses," she said, adding that Cantor "lives in this rarified world of big money and power."

Inside, Cantor's advisory council — a group that a Cantor aide said numbered more than 400 people — sat on chairs lined up in a large room. Cantor barred the media from attending his event.

The council meetings are held about three times a year plus a holiday event. Cantor has held the events since he was elected to Congress. Cantor said afterward that anyone can sign up to attend the council meeting. "This is a campaign event open to the public," he told reporters. "All you have to do is go online and sign up."

The protesters started the evening lined up along a hotel entrance before moving to a nearby shopping center. Some people were provided transportation to the site, according to **Virginia Organizing**, a left-leaning grass-roots organization that coordinated the event with other groups, including the Service Employees International Union.

Ray Allen, a political adviser to Cantor, said the protest was organized out of Washington.

<http://www2.wsls.com/news/2011/sep/01/tdmet01-about-200-rally-outside-cantor-event-in-mi-ar-1277889/>

HOLIDAY INN IN VIRGINIA KICKS OUT PROGRESSIVE GROUPS

Daily Kos

September 1, 2011

Cantor held an Advisory Council gathering, closed to the media but open to constituents who registered ahead of time, at the Holiday Inn Koger Center in Richmond. A coalition of progressive Virginia organizing groups — Progress Virginia, OurDC, and **Virginia Organizing** — had booked rooms and a separate ballroom in the hotel to hold a “jobs rally” countering Cantor’s event. According to organizers, the groups planned to invite Cantor to attend their rally after his own event, in the hope that he would listen to their concerns regarding job creation and unemployment.

But just hours before the events were set to begin, the Holiday Inn canceled the groups’ ballroom and room reservations and ordered the groups to remain off of hotel property during Cantor’s meeting. According to organizers, hotel management falsely accused them of smoking in their rooms and used that as justification to cancel their reservations. A representative of Holiday Inn who only agreed speak on the condition of anonymity, however, said the hotel was seeking to avoid confrontation between the progressive groups and those attending the Cantor event. He would not comment on whether the hotel had any communications with Cantor or his staff regarding the progressive groups.

They then made signage and marched across from the hotel as the police were called to make sure they were not on the property while Cantor was there.

<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2011/09/01/1012691/-HOLIDAY-INN-IN-VIRGINIA-KICKS-OUT-PROGRESSIVE-GROUPS>

State, local groups host candidates' forum

Insidenova.com

September 17, 2011

State legislators and candidates met for a couple of hours Saturday in a friendly forum hosted by St. Paul’s United Methodist Church in Woodbridge.

Questions from moderator John Horejsi, the coordinator for Social Action Linking Together, or SALT, centered around business subsidies, education, predatory lending and other subjects.

Participation on the panel was fluid, with some candidates leaving early while others arrived late. Most were around long enough to contribute at least some of their thoughts during the forum sponsored by **Virginia Organizing**, Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizers, Prince William Education Association and Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants along with SALT.

<http://www2.insidenova.com/news/2011/sep/17/state-local-groups-host-candidates-forum-ar-1317819/>

Fair and square?

c-ville

September 27, 2011

Spurred by data obtained by **Virginia Organizing** (VO) through a Freedom of Information Act request, community members have urged City Council to review the city's hiring practices, and have voiced concerns about the perceived under-representation of minority supervisors and managers in city jobs.

"There are a lot of minority groups leaving the city and working in other states or counties because there aren't adequate jobs here," said Jona Noelle Baily. "We want them to stay here, and City Council needs to create an incentive for them to stay here."

Backed by VO, Baily and other community organizers urged City Council to make this issue a high priority and conduct an anonymous survey to ask city employees about barriers that prevent them from becoming supervisors or managers. The campaign also called for the establishment of set goals to measure progress and hold departments accountable. Council pledged to organize a work session to explore the issue and find solutions.

According to documents provided to VO, 35 percent of Charlottesville's 291 public works employees are African-American, but only 16 percent are supervisors or managers. In the Social Services department, African-Americans account for 24 percent of the total employees, but only one of the 17 supervisors is black. The only Hispanic supervisor works in the Community Attention department. Overall, only 1.1 percent of the city's employees are Hispanic.

http://www.c-ville.com/Article/Government/Fair_and_square/?z_Issue_ID=11102609114140485

Rove Blasts Obama Policies at Forum

Fredericksburg Patch

September 29, 2011

Karl Rove came to Fredericksburg blasting Barack Obama's domestic policies, singling out the president's handling of the economy and healthcare reform for particular emphasis. He also weighed in on the 2012 presidential race, saying with a grain of salt that the Republican nomination would fall to Mitt Romney or Rick Perry and that Obama's reelection hinges on the economy.

Outside the event, as patrons were taking their seats, about 25 demonstrators gathered in protest of Rove's appearance on campus. Organized by the non-partisan progressive political group **Virginia Organizing**, the protestors loudly chanted slogans like "Jail Karl Rove", "Karl Rove, Go Home", "Make Jobs, Not War," and others. The group rallied along the sides of the campus walk leading up to the main entrance to the Dodd Auditorium.

<http://fredericksburg.patch.com/articles/rove-blasts-obama-policies-at-forum>

Washington

Gregoire to set special session

The Spokesman-Review
September 22, 2011

The state's economic outlook is likely to get worse in the next two months. Until she knows how much worse, Gov. Chris Gregoire said Wednesday she won't call the Legislature into a special session until November.

"It would be premature for me to call them back before the next forecast. They need to know how large the problem is," Gregoire told about 250 business leaders gathered at the Suncadia Lodge for the annual "policy summit" of the Association of Washington Business.

Outside the lodge's entrance, a group of protesters led by the **Washington Community Action Network**, was drawing lines in the sand, demanding the state raise taxes to cover at least part of its budget problems. They want the state to eliminate certain business tax preferences, which they call loopholes.

AWB members arriving for the luncheon drove past more than 100 demonstrators who were chanting and holding signs like "I pay my taxes, you pay yours." It was part of a series of demonstrations around the state targeting Chase Bank, and one of the tax preferences they want the Legislature to eliminate is an exemption for some mortgage profits for out-of-state banks.

<http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2011/sep/22/gregoire-to-set-special-session/?prefetch=1>

West Virginia – [West Virginia Citizen Action in the News](#)

Marcellus shale: Environmentalists urge strong regulation

The Register-Herald
September 4, 2011

Environmental forces express a sense of urgency when it comes to getting Marcellus regulations penned into law, but so far, the Legislature doesn't seem to be in much of a rush to get the job done.

And with so many heavy issues surrounding the fledgling industry, including air and water concerns, as well as surface owners' rights, environmentalists say lawmakers need to get moving.

Julie Archer, representing both **West Virginia Citizen Action Group** and the West Virginia Surface Owners Rights Organization, echoed Warren's concerns.

"There are no pre-permit incentives to encourage the driller to work with the surface owner in planning where and how access roads will be built, maintained and

reclaimed," Archer said.

"For horizontal wells, the proposed legislation would give surface owners 'at least 72 hours' notice prior to entry to survey and give them an additional 15 days to comment on a permit. While this is more than surface owners get now, it is not enough. We don't think it's asking too much to require drillers to negotiate a written agreement with surface owners, to require them to post an additional bond that guarantees the surface owners compensation for damages."

Archer said such provisions should be applicable to all wells, not just the horizontal variety. In fact, she said, multiple problems exist with the conventional gas well drilling.

"Regulations should be based on the amount of land disturbed and water used, rather than whether a well is 'vertical' versus 'horizontal' or 'deep,'" she said.

<http://www.register-herald.com/todaysfrontpage/x1095936182/Marcellus-shale-Environmentalists-urge-strong-regulation>

Local groups show opposition to transportation cuts

Charleston Gazette
September 7, 2011

If Republicans in the House of Representatives succeed in their efforts to impose major cuts on federal transportation funding, those cuts will have a major impact on jobs, as well as on the safety of our roads and bridges in West Virginia and throughout the country.

That was the message of a gathering of local groups opposed to the cuts on Wednesday.

Current federal transportation legislation expires on Sept. 30.

"The House bill proposes a 35 percent cut in transportation funding for the next six years," said Gary Zuckett, executive director of the **West Virginia Citizen Action Group**. "That would be a job killer.

"The Senate is working on a bill to keep our current transportation funding, at least for the next two years," Zuckett said during a press conference at the Affiliated Construction Trades building in Charleston.

<http://wvgazette.com/News/201109071177>

Gary Zuckett: Keep the promise of Social Security

Sunday Gazette-Mail
September 11, 2011

We all have heard the casualty reports from today's economy. Almost 14 million Americans are now out of work, and another 25 million Americans are unemployed or under-employed. These reports are grim, but even more so for our elderly, one of the hardest hit groups by what enablers are calling the "new normal."

Elderly Americans, most of whom have worked nearly all of their adult lives and invested Social Security payroll taxes from every single paycheck, face a new threat: Some are talking about hiking the retirement age for receiving full Social Security benefits from 67 to 69.

However, the sad state of today's economy means that most older unemployed workers cannot find a job. In 2009, one year after the economic meltdown began, nearly three out of every four new retirees -- 2 million out of 2.7 million Americans - claimed retirement benefits early, resulting in a permanent benefit reduction of as much as 25 percent.

Many of these two million Americans retired early because they had no choice. They may have been laid off and are unlikely to find new jobs. They may have health and physical challenges. And many face age discrimination. Older workers have little likelihood of getting back into the work force. They should not be penalized for their lack of options.

Raising the retirement age from 67 to 69 represents a whopping 13 percent cut in Social Security benefits for those affected. And this comes after we've already bumped the retirement age from 65 to 67 for those born after 1960. Not only would this new cut create increased hardships for unemployed seniors; it's a broken promise.

What is the promise we made when we set up Social Security? It is a social contract, a promise we make to each other that when you grow old or are hurt or if a parent or spouse dies suddenly, you're not alone. We, as a society, will help out. This isn't a government give-away or welfare. Remember, we all pay into Social Security every time we receive a paycheck. Social Security is a uniquely and profoundly American program and it represents a profoundly patriotic value -- we're all in this together.

For 76 years, Social Security has been helping keep elderly Americans out of poverty. It helps pay the utility bills and puts food on the table. And it's not making anyone rich -- the average retiree receives less than \$14,000 a year, which is even less than full-time at minimum wage. Still, for many, Social Security represents that line of demarcation between "making it" and abject poverty. Between staying in your own home and moving in with the kids, if you're lucky. Social Security did away with the "poor farm."

It is important to remember the principles upon which this promise to America was founded. Social Security belongs to the workers and their families who worked hard, put in payroll taxes and earned its benefits. Social Security did not cause the federal budget crunch and the deficit should not be used as an excuse to cut benefits.

Unfortunately, from time to time, some people suggest we forget the promise made when we first created Social Security as part of FDR's New Deal. Now, with the economy struggling and many elderly workers suffering, it's a good time for all of us to remember the promise. Let us say with pride that when it comes to Social Security, we made a promise to Americans. And we kept it.

Zuckett is executive director of WV Citizen Action Group and WV Citizen Action Education Fund.

<http://wvgazette.com/Opinion/OpEdCommentaries/201109110212>

Cutbacks put strain on bridges and roads

Charleston Daily Mail

September 13, 2011

One in six West Virginia bridges crossed daily is likely to be deteriorated at a time the state faces an annual cutback of \$140 million in federal road money, a legislative panel learned Monday.

In another matter, the Select Committee on Infrastructure agreed to seek a special study on one-stop shopping by the Division of Motor Vehicles amid a complaint its vehicle licensing program is too slow.

Gary Zuckett, executive director of West Virginia-Citizen Action Group, told the panel the state ranks eighth nationally in having the "worst" bridges.

Deferring maintenance on those spans and roads can cost three times as much as preventive repairs to keep them in good shape, he said.

But now, with attention riveted in the nation's capital on cutting spending amid a multi-trillion-dollar debt, Zuckett warned that federal funding will be hard to come by.

In fact, he said, the House Transportation Committee is eyeing a bill that would trim \$140 million from West Virginia's share in each of the next six fiscal years.

"They would leave a big hole in our ability in West Virginia to keep up repairs, let alone having new road construction and bridge construction," Zuckett said.

Besides hurting the state's capacity for making needed repairs, he warned, the rollback in federal dollars would likely cost the state some 5,000 jobs.

Of late, he said, there has been a movement afoot to pass a two-year maintenance effort, with the existing funding due to expire at the end of the month.

"Right now is where the rubber meets the road," he said.

<http://www.dailymail.com/ap/ApTopStories/201109134033>

**AFL-CIO, Construction Trades, WVCAG Supporting the Jobs Act
St. Albans, WV**

Youtube.com
September 18, 2011



Labor, Community and Faith groups join to make a statement in support of the American Jobs Act. Location is the Dick Henderson bridge linking St Albans to Nitro, WV. Speakers in order of appearance: Gary Zuckett, WV Citizen Action; Wayne Rebich, WV Affiliated Construction Trades Foundation; Larry Matheney, Sec/Treas. WV AFL-CIO

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBEYKd8fH2I>

Additional Information -

<http://www.publicnewsservice.org/index.php/?content/article/22388-1>

Groups call for infrastructure repairs to help unemployed

West Virginia Public Broadcasting
September 28, 2011

A coalition of labor, civic, and faith groups in West Virginia is calling for federal funding for infrastructure repairs in the state. They believe the President's proposed American Jobs Act will achieve that goal while reducing unemployment.

Last week, President Obama used an Ohio bridge in need of repair as a setting to promote his American Jobs Act.

Today, some West Virginians will gather at the Port of St Albans to highlight the planned reconstruction of the Dick Henderson Bridge for a similar purpose.

Gary Zuckett, of **West Virginia Citizen Action**, says this and others like it are the kinds of projects that will put West Virginians back to work.

Zuckett: "The West Virginia Department of Highways is going to let out a bid to replace that bridge. We wanted to highlight the fact that we need more of this in West Virginia and all over the country. We think that the American Jobs Act will do exactly that, will put people back to work rebuilding the infrastructure here in West Virginia and in our country."

The House Transportation Committee released an outline this summer that would cut Federal support for transportation projects in the.

Zuckett and other in the West Virginia group call the House proposal a job killer for both West Virginia and the nation.

<http://www.dailymail.com/ap/ApTopStories/201109134033>

Wisconsin – Citizen Action of Wisconsin

Top DOT official tells staff not to mention free voter ID cards to the public – unless they ask

Madison.com

September 7, 2011

An internal memo from a top Department of Transportation official instructs workers at Division of Motor Vehicles service centers not to tell members of the public that they can obtain voter identification cards free of charge -- unless they know to ask for it.

The memo, recently obtained by The Capital Times, was written by Steve Krieser and sent to all state Department of Transportation and Department of Motor Vehicles employees on July 1, the same day employees were to begin issuing photo IDs in accordance with a controversial new voter photo ID law adopted earlier in the year.

As laid out in the memo, failure to check a box when applying for photo ID with the Division of Motor Vehicles will result in the payment of \$28. Interviews conducted about the memo suggest the state is more interested in continuing to charge the fee, which is required for a photo ID used for non-voting purposes, than it is in removing all barriers and providing easy access to a free, photo ID.

Robert Kraig, the executive director of the progressive advocacy group **Citizen Action of Wisconsin**, however, scoffs at claims that the policy as outlined in the memo is designed to prevent the public from ripping off the state by obtaining free identification cards for purposes other than voting.

"That is absurd. They are the ones who created this whole situation by passing this law," Kraig says, adding that if some people get free cards when they would not have before, "well that's the state's problem."

http://host.madison.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/capitol-report/article_335f59fa-d8fe-11e0-8a23-001cc4c03286.html#ixzz1Xx6Ap8MO

Walker administration hiding benefits to health care reform

GazetteXtra.com
September 8, 2011

The Walker administration recently released a report at a closed "by-invitation only" media briefing purporting to show that the new national health care reform law would negatively affect Wisconsin's health insurance market. I attempted to attend the briefing but was forced to leave. Reporters were told the briefing was "off the record" and couldn't use recording devices or quote the speakers. The study author, health care economist Dr. Jonathan Gruber of MIT, wasn't invited.

In addition to the oddly secretive release, Walker's administration attempted to bury many of the most important report findings to create a negative impression of the Affordable Care Act. The most significant finding in Gruber's report is that the new law will result in 340,000 uninsured Wisconsinites gaining coverage. However, this information isn't even mentioned in the Walker administration's press release about the report.

The administration also gave a slanted account of the impact of reform on Wisconsin individual and small group health insurance markets, focusing entirely on premium increases that will impact some participants. They didn't highlight report findings that showed substantial premium reductions for Wisconsinites who pay the highest rates currently. Instead, they focused attention on those who would pay more in the short term because health reform forces the insurance industry to end discrimination based on pre-existing conditions, age and gender, and requires higher quality coverage.

Currently, individuals and small groups that are younger and healthier get lower rates because insurers discriminate against others and often sell substandard policies. Insurers can deny coverage, charge discriminatory rates or impose exclusionary riders for policyholders with pre-existing conditions. Over 1 million Wisconsinites younger than 65 have pre-existing conditions serious enough to trigger such discrimination. Ending this discrimination will cause some individuals who are fortunate enough to get low premiums in the current system to pay higher premiums in the short term, but in return they'll be guaranteed higher quality coverage, which the insurance industry can never take away as they age and face medical conditions.

The only permanent "losers" in ending health insurance discrimination are the insurers who profit by offering affordable coverage only to people whom they deem less likely to file medical claims. Those fortunate enough to be young and healthy might get good deals from the health insurance industry, but they can lose coverage or be priced out as they age or if they face medical conditions. If a small employer has affordable coverage today, one employee suffering a serious medical condition can price the whole group out of the market.

Once the Affordable Care Act is fully implemented, consumers will have a right to buy affordable coverage in a new marketplace where insurers cannot take it away or charge discriminatory rates as someone ages or the person's health status changes.

The way the Walker administration handled the release of this important report raises questions about how Wisconsin will implement national health care reform. Wisconsin residents must watch closely this fall when the Legislature is expected to take up this crucial issue.

Robert Kraig is executive director of [Citizen Action of Wisconsin](#).

<http://gazettextra.com/news/2011/sep/08/walker-administration-hiding-benefits-health-care/>

Lawmakers aim to secure patient protections

Wisconsin Radio Network
September 8, 2011

Wisconsin Patients' Bill of Rights is unveiled at State Capitol.

Robert Kraig with [Citizen Action of Wisconsin](#) says the bill kicks off the debate about how the state will implement national health care legislation. "It begins a public discussion of whether or not we should outlaw the worst health insurance industry abuses and I think that's a productive discussion, but it creates a legislative vehicle where legislators have to take sides: 'Am I for discriminating against people with preexisting conditions or am I against it?'"

Under the measure, Wisconsin families would never have to worry about being denied insurance due to a preexisting condition or losing their coverage when someone gets sick. According to the Federal Health Department, many Wisconsinites could potentially be considered as having a preexisting condition. "One million people — people under 65, so excluding people who are retired — one million have a condition which the ins industry would definitely exclude them from coverage for ... 2.4 million have a condition that they could either exclude them or charge a discriminatory rate."

Kraig explains, if insurance actuaries believe that your condition increases the likelihood that you'd cost the insurance company more money, they could simply charge more, exclude you from coverage altogether, or carve out a portion of the policy. Kraig says this Patients' Bill of Rights would guarantee everyone would be able to buy affordable health insurance coverage.

The bill is sponsored by Representative Jon Richards (D-Milwaukee) and Senator Jon Erpenbach (D-Middleton). It secures into state law key health care consumer and patient protections provided under the federal Affordable Care Act.

<http://www.wrn.com/2011/09/lawmakers-aim-to-secure-patient-protections/>

Dems propose health care legislation

The Badger Herald
September 8, 2011

While President Obama's health care law continues to face strong opposition nationally, a bill recently proposed to both houses of state Legislature would keep health insurance companies from refusing clients because of pre-existing conditions.

Senator Jon Erpenbach, D-Middleton, and Rep. Jon Richards, D-Milwaukee, plan to introduce a companion bill to the Senate and Assembly which would keep health insurers from not accepting a customer with a pre-existing medical condition and other similar practices, according to a statement from **Citizen Action of Wisconsin**.

The proposal would institute many of the protections included in the Affordable Care Act into Wisconsin legislation, the statement said. Citizen Action of Wisconsin is calling the measure a "bill of rights" for Wisconsin health care consumers.

Along with prohibiting health care companies from turning down clients with pre-existing conditions, Richards said the legislation forbids companies from establishing lifetime coverage caps for potential recipients.

The proposed legislation would also require health insurance companies to cover emergency hospital visits, Richards said.

http://badgerherald.com/news/2011/09/08/dems_propose_health_.php

State Supreme Court dispute may be tough to decide

The Wisconsin State Journal

September 11, 2011

Although a special prosecutor decided not to bring criminal charges in the June 13 altercation between two state Supreme Court justices, a disciplinary panel continues to investigate.

But even if the Wisconsin Judicial Commission recommends discipline in the case involving Justices David Prosser and Ann Walsh Bradley, the members of the court may have a conflict of interest that could prevent them from deciding the matter, experts in judicial ethics say.

The state's Code of Judicial Conduct specifically prohibits judges from presiding over cases in which they are witnesses in the matter under dispute. Six of the seven justices were present when the argument erupted just outside Bradley's office, culminating in Prosser putting his hands on Bradley's neck. Justice Patrick Crooks was the only justice absent.

Robert Kraig, executive director of **Citizen Action of Wisconsin**, which filed the complaint against Gableman, said it's time to change how justices are disciplined.

"I think it's becoming very clear the very divided and contentious court can't police itself at all," Kraig said. "There needs to be an independent mechanism, I think, that is seen as impartial and not controlled by the justices."

http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/crime_and_courts/article_916d769a-dc77-11e0-85c7-001cc4c002e0.html#ixzz1Xx8otCbZ

State starts making public Medicaid cut proposals

Forbes

September 7, 2011

MADISON, Wis. -- Gov. Scott Walker's administration unveiled a website Monday that includes a handful of Medicaid cost-savings proposals intended to help it reach required cuts of about \$500 million over the next two years.

But there's a long way to go.

The six areas of savings detailed Monday amount to about \$119 million, 25 percent of the \$468 million in cuts that must be made under the two-year budget that took effect in July.

Most of what was released was either already known about or would make little progress toward what needs to be cut. The largest single item was \$106 million in savings achieved through freezing enrollment in the popular Family Care program, which is designed to keep people out of nursing homes, a step that the Legislature approved in June.

Other than that, there was only about \$13 million in additional savings of state money put forward in five other ideas including modifying payments to those providing end-stage renal disease services and changing the formula for determining pharmacy reimbursements.

Robert Kraig, director of the consumer advocacy group **Citizen Action of Wisconsin**, called Monday's proposals "more or less window dressing for drastic cuts in Medicaid."

Efficiencies being proposed may be needed, but they will do little to get toward the cuts called for under Walker's budget, he said.

The agency has been under attack from advocacy groups for not releasing its ideas sooner in order to give the public time to comment. The public is given the chance via the website to comment on the proposals.

Kraig said it's always a good idea to solicit the public's input, "but they haven't offered the option of having the wealthy and corporations pay their fair share and not cut Medicaid."

The cuts were ordered given growth in Medicaid and a decrease in federal funding to pay for the programs which include BadgerCare Plus, Family Care, and SeniorCare. About one out of every five Wisconsin residents, or 1.2 million people, participates in at least one of its programs.

http://www.forbes.com/feeds/ap/2011/09/26/general-wi-medicaid-savings_8701185.html

Protestors support President's plan for job creation

CBS 58

September 22, 2011



MILWAUKEE -- When the President asked for help to pass his jobs bill, dozens of local residents said they had to do something.

Their answers were to gather on the North Avenue Bridge, as visible a spot as possible, to urge others to support the plan that would rely heavily on construct and bridge repair projects to generate jobs.

Citizen Action of Wisconsin, part of a grassroots effort that first gained a lot of attention over its mobilization of support for President Obama's health care reform law.

"We're here to say, Congress stop blocking. We need action. Wisconsin is in desperate need of jobs and we're not going to have a vibrant economy unless people have money in their pockets and they're spending it," said Robert Kraig, a member of Citizen Action Wisconsin.

VIDEO: <http://vimeo.com/29445264>

<http://www.cbs58.com/news/top-stories/Presidents-job-speech-sparks-protest-in-Milwaukee--130386508.html>