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Lawmaker calls for Arizona boycott over anti-immigrant law

By Pepe Lozano

President Obama said the controversial anti-immigrant law in Arizona is “misguided.” The bill was signed by Republican Gov. Jan Brewer late afternoon on April 23.

The law makes it a crime under state law to be in the country illegally and requires local police to question people about their immigration status if there is a reason to suspect they are undocumented.

Critics of the measure say it would lead to racial profiling, unwarranted arrests and greater distrust of police in the Latino community that could translate into fear of reporting crimes.

Obama said he has instructed the Department of Justice to examine the Arizona law to see if it violates constitutional and civil rights.

Latino lawmakers are demanding more federal accountability and a stronger voice from the Obama administration in the call for immigration reform.

Rep. Raul Grijalva, D-Ariz., is calling for an economic boycott of Arizona.

“If state lawmakers don’t realize or don’t care how detrimental this will be, we need to make them understand somehow,” he told reporters April 22.

“Just as professional athletes refused to rec-



ognize Arizona until it recognized Martin Luther King Jr., we are calling on organizations not to schedule conventions and conferences in Arizona until it recognizes civil rights and the meaning of due process.”

In a strongly worded letter, Rep. Luis Gutierrez, D-Ill., said, “It is open season on the Latino community in Arizona.”

Giving police a broad mandate to arrest people for looking a certain way isn’t just an invita-

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tion to racial profiling, “It’s like waving a green flag and saying ‘gentlemen start your engines,” said Gutierrez. “It’s an insult to American justice and one of the harshest assaults on basic civil rights in recent American history.”

Gutierrez adds, “We need the federal government to assert its supremacy on the immigration

The Arizona measure is arguably the most anti-immigrant legislation to date.

issue and make it clear to state legislatures, cowboy cops, and the American people that the federal government is in charge and effectively enforcing and regulating immigration.”

“Obama the President needs to stand up for what Obama the candidate and what Obama the Senator, and what Obama the Chicago community organizer stood for and lead the Congress toward reform,” Gutierrez said.

Civil rights leaders from the African American, Asian, Jewish and Latino communities issued statements immediately after the governor signed the bill into law, as did labor leaders.

Deborah Lauter of the Anti-Defamation League tied the new law to the ideas of far-right, racist fringe groups. “Laws like this one and the immigration debate that surrounds them have become a flashpoint for racist and neo-Nazi extremist groups that foment bigotry and blame immigrants for all of our country’s problems.” Lauter recalled the “ugly anti-immigrant backlash” against the previous generations in the Jewish community. “We do not want to see that history

repeated for anyone, and we cannot let the task of fighting it fall on the shoulders of its victims alone.”

Legal groups, like Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, foresee a long and expensive legal fight that would have “severe effects on Arizona’s economy and public safety.” According to Thomas Saenz of MALDEF the legal challenges makes the law “an extraordinarily costly exercise in political symbolism and racial demagoguery.”

The Arizona measure is arguably the most anti-immigrant legislation to date. Many police chiefs nationwide also oppose the law saying it threatens public safety and limits the ability to fight violent crime.

Meanwhile, Democratic leaders in Congress said they would place immigration reform ahead of the president’s energy bill, and bring it for a vote this year.



Pepe Lozano writes for the People’s World.

Finance reform should include bank break-up

By PW Editorial Board

President Obama took the fight to curb the financial industry abuse to the place where the worst economic disaster since the Great Depression began - Wall Street.

In a speech at New York’s Cooper Union college, the president, literally in the shadow of the center of world finance, declared that “the crisis was born of a failure of responsibility from Wall Street to Washington.”

He warned that without change on Wall Street, “America is doomed to repeat the past.”

As he spoke, sweeping proposals for the biggest overhaul of the U.S. financial system since the 1930s were getting closer to votes in Congress.

But labor and progressives continued to warn against the danger of moves on Capitol Hill to weaken finance reform.

Progressives are also concerned that the bill approved by the Senate Banking Committee, sweeping as it is, does not break up the megabanks, necessary, they say, to creating a less risky financial system. Both Treasury and Federal Reserve officials have, thus far, rejected calls to do

this. The GOP, which is getting more donations from Wall Street than Democrats, remains opposed to the Senate bill.

The Senate bill, already approved by the Senate’s banking committee, stipulates several major reforms in addition to a bank pre-funded resolution authority. The other major reforms include:

- establishment of a consumer protection agency,
- curbs on the trading of derivatives
- procedures that would allow the breaking up of large banks when and if they fail.

Sam Webb, chair of the Communist Party USA, described the bill as “a step forward but what are missing,” he said, “are stronger measures that would break up the big banks before they fail and stronger measures that would increase capital requirements for the banks.”

Unions are planning to bring more than 10,000 to demonstrate on Wall Street April 29. They will demand not just stricter regulations on high finance, but taxes on banks that can be used to create jobs.



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“Workers of the world stuck together” and won at Hugo Boss

By Rick Nagin

Streaming into bright Spring sunlight in the parking lot in front of the Hugo Boss men's suit plant in Brooklyn, Ohio, workers shouted, “We did it!” and “We have our jobs!”

They had just voted 142 -32 to accept a new three-year contract won by their union at 3 am that morning ending a battle, that seemed at times hopeless after the company announced in December it would close the plant April 27 and shift production to Turkey and Slovenia.

“I’ve got my job and she’s got to eat,” said Anthony Senart, 23, holding the hand of his 6-year old daughter, Kaira. Senart had been laid off two weeks earlier as the plant gradually went into a complete shut down. “I’ll go back to work in six weeks. I feel excellent. I get to keep working.”

Tired but proud, Bruce Raynor, the National President of Workers United SEIU gave details of the new agreement at a hastily called press conference with the union members, their supporters and public officials including Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland.

“The workers stood up like champions,” he said. “But we could not have done this alone. We had the support of our political leaders, unions around the world, Danny Glover, religious leaders and this entire community.”

The union, he said, had to take a pay cut, “but we kept the average wage above \$10 an hour. We kept the health insurance, 11 holidays and the pensions.”

Under threat of sanctions from the National



Labor Relations Board, the company returned to the bargaining table April 21, but, Raynor said, the breakthrough came because of “global pressure.”

Reversal of a plant-closing decision like this is “almost unprecedented,” he said, but in the image-conscious fashion industry, brand and label are key. “Hugo Boss’s reputation was on the line.”

The plant closing was protested by state pension funds in Ohio, California, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, which had hundreds of millions invested in Permira, a British private equity firm with controlling interest in Hugo Boss.

Protests also came from IG Metall, the powerful German union that sits on Hugo Boss’s board and Spanish unions picketed an international tennis tournament sponsored by the company.

“Even the Turkish unions signed letters of support,” Raynor said. “The workers of the world stuck together.”

Whereas previously the workers had been forced to accept short weeks, they will now be guaranteed 40 hours work, he said. “And the company must give us 140 days notice if they get the bright idea they want to close it again.”

Reversal of a plant-closing decision like this is “almost unprecedented.”

LOCAL NEWS

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Detroit ministers prepare for Social Forum

By John Rummel

Some would say this city seems under siege. The unemployment rate of almost 50 percent is a catastrophe. Circling vulture like are corporate interests and developers whose plans for privatization, demolition, and union busting will push the city's "pain meter" ever higher.

But hope is not lost. One way Detroiters are fighting back is by taking advantage of the U.S. Social Forum, an event expected to draw tens of thousands. It's coming to Detroit from June 22 to 26 and its presence is being used to offer new solutions putting the interests of residents, families and children who live here at "the front of the line."

A press recent press conference sponsored by the Faith and Spirituality Committee of the US Social Forum spoke to the issues residents are confronting, privatization of public schools and hospitals, foreclosures and joblessness.

"Our city is under assault in a way I have not seen in forty years" declared Dr Shea Howell of Detroit City of Hope. "We are under attack in the same way that Baghdad was attacked with one bomb after another."

Rev David Bullock, president of the Hamtramck NAACP and Greenation, called for good paying jobs. Tying the need for a clean environment to job creation Bullock called for retrofitting empty auto plant to manufacture wind turbines.

Ley PODER frenaría abusos contra trabajadores, dice senador

Por Teresa Albano

Apoiado por líderes de derechos civiles y de sindicatos, el Senador Robert Menéndez, Demócrata por Nueva Jersey, anunció el 4 de abril en una conferencia de prensa en el Capitolio un proyecto de ley que fortalecería los derechos de los trabajadores y de los inmigrantes.

Dijo Menéndez que la propuesta de ley "POWER," [poder], que por sus siglas en inglés significa "Protección a nuestros Obreros de Explotación y Represalias," fue escrita como respuesta a varias denuncias hechas en el país. Según dichas denuncias, los patrones están amenazándoles con deportación y redadas migratorias a trabajadores que hablan de sus derechos en el trabajo.

Una de estas denuncias viene del Ingeniero Daniel Castellanos, natural de Lima, Perú.

Castellanos fue contratado para trabajar en Nueva Orleans después de lo sucedido con el Huracán Katrina, cuando miles de residentes de la costa del Golfo buscaban trabajo y vivienda.

"El patrón de Daniel lo pagaba la mitad del salario que se le pagaría a un trabajador norteamericano, sometía a los trabajadores a condiciones atroces, y contaba con el miedo que estos tenían de ser deportados para mantenerlos en silencio. Cuando Daniel llevó a los trabajadores a una lucha pública en búsqueda de respeto y dignidad, fue despedido. Esta ley le protegería a Daniel y a otros como él, para que puedan responder sin miedo ni in-

quietud a empleadores abusivos. Esta ley ayudaría a nuestra economía asegurando que tanto los trabajadores norteamericanos como los inmigrantes sean tratados justamente" dijo Menéndez.

Se pueden encontrar numerosos ejemplos de maltrato por parte de empleadores que utilizan redadas migratorias para mantener a los trabajadores "en su lugar" y así maximizar su tasa de ganancias.

La ley "PODER" (POWER) les proporcionaría a trabajadores valientes las herramientas necesarias para asegurar que sean protegidas sus derechos de organizar y de trabajar en un ambiente seguro y legal," dijo Marielena Hincapié, directora ejecutiva del Centro Nacional de Ley Migratoria.

En una declaración, el Vicepresidente ejecutivo de la Unión Internacional de Empleados de Servicios [SEIU, por sus siglas en inglés], Eliseo Medina dijo que trabajadores nacidos en Estados Unidos también son afectados por este abuso, y no ganan ni derechos ni mayores salarios debido a la deportación de indocumentados o redadas migratorias.

La introducción de este proyecto de ley llega al mismo tiempo que el surgimiento de una coalición a favor de una amplia reforma a las leyes laborales y migratorias, que incluiría un camino hacia la legalización y la ciudadanía, derechos civiles y laborales, y reunificación familiar.

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