

PEOPLE'S WORLD

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November 30, 2013

Labor plans for big Black Friday mobilization

By John Wojcik



Walmart workers, the nation's labor leaders, and community leaders from all across the country called a press conference here yesterday where they announced plans to turn the busiest holiday shopping day of the year into one of the largest mobilizations of workers in U.S. history.

Organizations representing tens of millions are throwing their support behind underpaid and abused Walmart workers who are planning strikes, walkouts and demonstrations at Walmart stores from coast to coast on Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving. Black Friday is traditionally the busiest shopping day of the holiday season.

Amid spontaneous strikes and protests already breaking out at Walmarts in many cities, the labor and community leaders declared their intention to pull off one of the largest mobilizations of U.S. working families ever when the Walmart workers walk out.

"Count on the full support of the millions of working people who belong to our unions," declared Richard Trumka, president of the 13 million member AFL-CIO at the press conference yesterday.

"The scale of support and nationwide activity being planned for Black Friday is unlike anything we've seen in recent history. Black Friday is des-

tined to become a Labor Day, not of picnics but of action for workers," said Peter Dreier, Distinguished Professor of Politics at Occidental College in Los Angeles and author of *The 100 Greatest Americans of the 20th Century: A Social Justice Hall of Fame*. Dreier joined the assembly of labor, community, civil rights, on-line organizing and other leaders at the press conference.

"As income inequality climbs to historic levels and families are increasingly pushed to the

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margins, working families are coming together to demand better," said Dreier. "This year," he predicted, "the day after Thanksgiving will be remembered not as the busiest shopping day of the year but as the day Americans took action to demand that the country's largest employer pay workers

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a livable wage and play a part in improving our economy.”

“The fight for better pay, full time work and an end to illegal retaliation against workers who fight for a better life isn’t just a Walmart workers issue,” said Trumka.

“It’s a family issue, it’s a women’s issue, it’s an immigrant rights issue, a student issue, an environmental protection issue and it’s a consumer issue - above all it’s an issue of fairness. The 13 million members of the AFL-CIO stand in lockstep with the Walmart workers.”

Tiffany Beroid, a Walmart worker active with the non-union group of Walmart associates who call themselves OUR Walmart, interrupted in the middle of the press conference to announce breaking news that the NLRB was prosecuting Walmart for illegal firings of workers who went out on strike last June.

“This is such good news,” she said. It is great to know that we actually have the government of

this country behind us.”

The decision to prosecute Walmart was made by Richard F. Griffin, Jr., only recently confirmed by the Senate as President Obama’s nominee to the position of General Counsel of the NLRB.

MoveOn.org, a huge national online organization that supports an array of progressive causes, has thrown its full support to the Black Friday organizing drive.

“Our 8 million members stand in solidarity with Walmart workers for a very simple reason: hardworking people deserve to be able to get by,” said Anna Gallana, executive director of MoveOn.org Civic Action. “Our members will be out in force on Black Friday exposing Walmart’s poverty wages, dangerous working conditions and illegal retaliation.”



John Wojcik is co-editor of Peoplesworld.org.

Young may pay zero premiums under Obamacare

By PW Editorial Board

Up to seven million people could qualify for federal subsidies that will pay the entire premium cost of some health plans being offered in the online marketplaces set up under Obamacare. The bulk of these policies are so-called “Bronze” plans offered in the Obamacare exchanges, which are divided into platinum, gold, silver and bronze “metal” categories, each of which offer a different mix of premiums, co-pays and deductibles.

The no premium plans were designed to encourage young and healthy people to enter (some) exchanges easily, enroll, and not worry about paying a penalty. Even low premium Bronze plans may be effectively premium-free if income is between 138 percent and 400 percent of the federal poverty levels, which entitles millions of workers to subsidies often greater than the premium. (Workers with incomes under 138 percent of the federal poverty levels (varies with family size) are eligible for expanded Medicaid and do not have to choose any plan from the exchanges.)

Subsidies for individual, as well as employer, plans are available, on basically the same terms. There has been a lot of phony hoorah from enemies of health care as a human right, and some backboneless Democrats as well, over cancellation of substandard individual plans. These are inferior plans that provide largely fictitious coverage: the deductibles, exceptions and co-pays are so egregious they will bankrupt most any worker who has to use the so-called covered services and medicines. Obamacare subsidies will make many of those with inferior, individual plans able to switch to better, standard and guaranteed plans free of premium charge as well! And those with premiums to pay are finding \$50 a month premiums instead of the inferior plan’s \$250 a month premium.

If recent zig zags and conflict over implementation of the health care law have proven anything it is this: The labor movement - and its allies - should consider a national patients rights organizing drive. The time to act is now!

Labor - and its allies - should consider a national patients rights organizing drive.

Supreme Court clamps down on Texas abortions

By Kelley Sinclair



With a 5-4 vote, the high court's conservative majority left in place a provision requiring doctors who perform abortions in clinics to obtain admitting privileges at a nearby hospital - regardless of location or the unproven willingness of said hospital to grant such rights.

Planned Parenthood and several Lone Star clinics had pleaded for the Supreme Court to overturn an appeals court ruling that kept the provision in effect while the overall law is appealed. Earlier a judge had said the requirement made no sense and should be suspended pending the outcome of the larger appeal.

The law as a whole remains on appeal with New Orleans' 5th Circuit Court of Appeals, where arguments are expected to be heard in January.

Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer, who sided with the liberal minority, indicated that the case, once ruled on by the 5th Circuit, is likely to return to the highest court for a conclusive end to the battle, which began this past summer in Texas when the Republican-dominated legislature pushed through the harsh abortion restrictions.

Previous rulings related to the issue of abortion have left in place restrictions when they do not pose an "undue burden" on a woman's ability to obtain an abortion.

Texas is the second largest state in the country, with much of the rural population strung

across hundreds of miles in West Texas and the Panhandle.

The de facto shutdown of most of the specialized women's health clinics means that women and their families in rural Texas must pony up gas and travel money, as well as miss work. It adds up to a financial hit that may not be burdensome to a woman of means, but poses a hardship to those not quite so fortunate.

Down in the Valley, population numbers are higher, but so is the poverty rate. Many here observe that the anti-abortion decision treats women from up in Dalhart down to Brownsville the same - as pawns without voices in a religiously-motivated crusade against women's rights.

Justice Breyer decried the decision not to block the admitting privileges requirement for the time being until a final ruling is issued. He said, "The harms to the individual women whose rights it restricts while it remains in effect will be permanent."

For her part, Richards pledged, "We will take every step we can to protect the health of Texas women. This law is blocking women in Texas from getting a safe and legal medical procedure that has been their constitutionally protected right for 40 years."

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Trial date set for Texas voter ID law

By Douglas Matus

Texas' voter ID law, passed by the Republican-controlled state legislature and widely condemned as discriminatory and unconstitutional, now has a day in court. Judge Nelva Gonzales Ramos of the U.S. 347th District Court, chose September 2, 2014 to hear the case in Corpus Christi. This date falls just over a month before the pivotal 2014 state-wide elections.

The Voter ID law, officially known as Senate Bill 14, has been the target of numerous lawsuits. On November 12th, a South Texas plaintiff group comprised of African American and Latino voters filed a claim under the authority of the 14th and 15th Amendments of the U.S. Constitution, while the U.S. Department of Justice filed its own claim back in August.

Critics of the law regard it as a blatant effort to disenfranchise large segments of the voting population, especially low-income and minority voters who traditionally vote against the conservative bloc that pushed Senate Bill 14 through. Proponents of the law cite a desire to limit voter fraud. According to the Dallas Morning News, the law would have prevented exactly four fraudulent votes cast statewide since 2004. In 2012, the New York Times publicized a study that determined voter ID laws cause a two percent drop in turnout among registered voters. In Texas this works out to 279,924 voters dissuaded from the polls of every election.

Anunció plan de ayuda a víctimas conflicto armado

Por Prensa Latina

El presidente Mauricio Funes anunció 21 noviembre la creación de un Programa de Reparación a las Víctimas de las graves violaciones a los derechos humanos cometidas durante el conflicto armado en El Salvador (1980-1992).

El gobernante hizo pública la noticia durante un homenaje póstumo a la luchadora social María Julia Hernández e informó que el plan fue aprobado a fines de octubre y ya se encuentra en vigencia. Explicó que "está basado en los estándares de reparación que establece el derecho internacional, y busca proveer medidas de rehabilitación en materia de salud y educación, acceso a programas de agricultura familiar".

Añadió que también incluye indemnizaciones, dentro de las posibilidades presupuestarias, así como "actos de dignificación desde el ámbito cultural dirigidos a honrar la memoria de las víctimas y garantías para la no repetición de los hechos tan atroces que marcaron nuestra historia".

El Presidente hizo un llamado a los otros órganos del Estado a "reflexionar y hacer lo que les corresponda dentro de sus ámbitos de competencia" en materia de reparaciones a las víctimas de la guerra interna.

Agregó que acciones como estas las realiza con el corazón y el convencimiento profundo de que ayudarán a

sanar las heridas que dejaron años de confrontación.

Funes aseguró que desde el inicio de su mandato adoptó "una serie de decisiones con el propósito de buscar una verdadera reconciliación de la sociedad salvadoreña". Apuntó que en honor a esta decisión rindió un homenaje póstumo y condecoró en nombre del Estado a los sacerdotes jesuitas de la Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas (UCA) asesinados en 1989.

Añadió que el 16 de enero de 2010 pidió perdón por las víctimas inocentes de la guerra civil, en un acto donde también expresó el reconocimiento de las atrocidades cometidas por agentes del Estado de aquella época. Asimismo, pidió perdón, bajo su investidura de jefe de Estado y en correspondencia con las resoluciones de organismos internacionales, por el asesinato de monseñor Oscar Arnulfo Romero. Romero fue matado el 24 de marzo 1980 mientras celebraba misa.

Funes anunció que en honor al obispo mártir y guía espiritual de la nación salvadoreña nombrara, en los próximos días, al Salón de Honor de la Casa Presidencial Monseñor Oscar Arnulfo Romero.

El Salvador vivió la mayor parte del siglo XX bajo dictaduras militares, a las cuales le pusieron fin los Acuerdos de Paz de 1992 tras 12 años de guerra interna.

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