



Political Action Update

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Join the Struggle

By Ken Sagar, President Iowa Federation of Labor
AFL-CIO

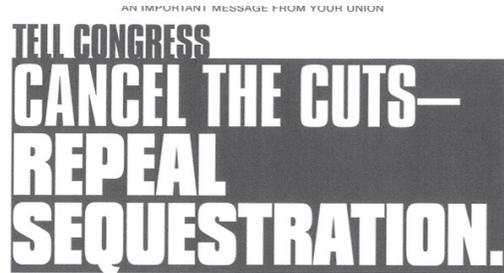
Across the Iowa and the rest of the United States, workers are frustrated with the lack of progress that we seem to be making. Workers wages are stagnant while Wall Street seems to be setting records on a regular basis. Too many have yet to find work, too much student loan debt, too much uncertainty but plenty for the top 1%.

We have to decide what kind of country we want to leave for future generations. Will it be one where the top income levels own all and live in opulence while the rest of us struggle to get by? Will it be one where the wealthiest have purchased the government elected officials who keep them in comfort while they deny the rest of us opportunity?

The labor movement has a long and rich history of working to improve the conditions of all workers. We negotiate contracts for our members that put upward pressure on wages and benefits that benefit all workers. We lobby for legislation that increases safe working conditions, unemployment compensation, and social good for all workers, not just those covered by collective bargaining agreements or those carrying a union card in their pockets.

We continue to struggle to make life in this state and this country better for those who work hard and play by the rules. We fight against the greed that is crippling this country, against the far right who want to deregulate industry and regulate our lives, and against those who would deny the workers of this nation a right to fair wages, decent benefits and dignity in the workplace.

Join the struggle. Being a dues-paying member is not enough. Make a commitment to stand in solidarity with workers who fight against the attacks on public workers, against the attacks on fair wages and against a fair and equitable society. Commit to becoming a trade unionist.



Across the board cuts, known as sequestration, went into effect on March 1st and will cost 750,000 jobs nationwide and cut Iowa \$56,102,741 in non-defense funding for critical programs. These “cuts” are real. We don’t see the impact immediately but they will continue to phase in over time and are just the first round of reductions. Everyone understands the need to get the budget under control. But cutting schools and education, law enforcement and public safety, public health and children’s vaccines, and environmental protection efforts just to protect tax cuts and loopholes for the wealthiest Americans is shortsighted.

Since November, working families across Iowa and the country have been mobilizing to prevent Congress from making cuts to essential services working families depend on, or to Medicaid, Medicare or Social Security benefits, and to ensure that the wealthy and Wall Street pay their fair share.

"It's real simple - just repeal it!" said Ken Sagar, President of the Iowa Federation of Labor. "Congress created sequestration and Congress can make it go away."

You can help to put pressure on Congress to act. Call [888-659-9401](tel:888-659-9401) and ask for your Congressman. They will put you through to the proper office and you will leave a message with a congressional staff person. "I want my Congressman to support the repeal of sequestration. Congress created this problem and they can cancel it. Act for the best interest of all workers."

It's not hard and you can help by spreading this message and have your friends and family do the same. You are on your way to being a union activist.

Bills on the Hill

**BY Charlie Wishman, Secretary/Treasurer
MEDICAID MADNESS**

This week the Iowa Senate finally was able to take action on the Medicaid expansion bill. We appreciate any of you who showed up to hear the debate or tuned in online. As we expected, this passed on a party line vote, 26-24. The Republicans who opposed the bill said that the state of Iowa can't trust the federal government to come through on Medicaid funding. Never once in the entire history of the Medicaid program has that been a problem. They also said that there shouldn't be a vote on Medicaid expansion until we see an alternative plan from Governor Branstad. The Governor announced on July 3, 2012 that he wouldn't be in favor of a Medicaid expansion. It's been 9 months, and we've yet to see a bill or real plan from him on an alternative. So far, all we've seen from him is a 4 page outline.

The Governor would rather the state pay more. Fiscally conservative? Not so much. Helping sick and poor Iowans? Not so much. We appreciate all of you who have lobbied your legislators at the capitol, at home, and anywhere else they'd listen to you. The bottom line here is that a Medicaid expansion would cost the state less, cover more people, and offer more services, and we've got a long way to go in convincing Republicans that an expansion is the right thing to do.

POLITICS OVER CONVICTIONS

Senator Mathis floor managed a bill that would give preference to in-state contractors employing in-state employees (SF 170). While there is some concern about possible retaliation from other states if we pass laws like this, this is an idea with a lot of merit that would make sure that Iowans have a much better chance at bidding on a job. What really struck me were Senator Bertrand's (R-Sioux City) comments during debate. He called the legislation "feel good" and said that he'd vote for it even though he doesn't support the bill, because he was afraid someone might use this vote against him in a campaign. Now, if you're looking for a reason to be cynical about politicians, look no further than this

example. We might disagree with his stance, but how about you do something truly shocking and vote your convictions? The bill passed 34-16, and now moves to the House.

REAL TAX REFORM THAT HELPS THE ECONOMY

The Senate also passed an increase to the EITC (Earned Income Tax Credit). The EITC is a tax credit that helps lower income but still working families. We've found that overwhelmingly the small amount that families do get back from the EITC helps put new tires on the car that's used to get to work, or buy school clothes or supplies for kids, or in one circumstance, to buy a headstone for their child who passed away. If you believe like we do that the economy is stimulated from the bottom up, not "trickle down," you'll understand why we support it. SF 422 passed 35-15, and will move on to the Iowa House.



John Phoenix, and Legislators, Bruce Hunter, Joe Riding, and Jerry Kearns, brave a cold windy winter day to show their support for postal workers at a rally on March 24 in Des Moines, in front of the main post office

Looking to the future on Immigration Reform

By Charlie Wishman, Secretary/Treasurer

Immigration is an issue that we as a labor movement have struggled with for over a century, and longer as a working class. Knowing that race and language frequently could cause divides in worker solidarity, using these issues against the working class has always been common by employers. Industries would frequently bring in people who spoke different languages to work in separate parts of the same plant, thinking that if people don't know each other's language it would make it difficult or impossible to organize.

During strikes, it was common for strikebreakers to be immigrants who had newly arrived in America and were looking for work (often times not knowing they were being used as scabs). Each time the labor movement faced these challenges, we've historically looked for ways to bring these new Americans into our way of thinking and get them organized where we can.

The challenges we face with immigration right now I believe aren't that different than before. We have a large undocumented workforce that is driving down wages in many sectors. Many of those workers are mistreated and suffer from wage theft by their employers. That's because the

employers know they can get away with it, due to the immigration status of the worker.

Let's get real about this. The election results showed each party that something needs to be done about the broken immigration system, and in a realistic way. I sincerely believe that immigration reform will happen. The question for the labor movement now is, how do we react? Do we open our training programs, get them introduced to the labor movement and bring them into our fold? Or do we drive them to non-union contractors, jobs, and workplaces? Do we grow the labor movement, or make a new enemy?

The times have changed, and we're not talking about Irish, Italians, African-Americans from the Southern US, or Eastern European immigrants this time. Nonetheless, this comes down to a very simple question about our core values we must ask ourselves. We believe there is dignity in all work, and there should be dignity for all workers. If we can't believe in that and stand up for it no matter what your language and skin color is, who are we as a labor movement? The answer is: one that won't last long.



Medicaid Madness Tour and Healthiest Iowa Initiative promote Medicaid Expansion

In an attempt to sway the Iowa House and Governor to support Medicaid Expansion, 26 organizations are participating in Healthiest Iowa Initiatives events around Iowa.

On Monday March 25, Healthiest Iowa initiative was launched at a press conference, in Des Moines, and the beginning of "Medicaid Madness" statewide press tour was also announced.

On March 25th, the Iowa Senate passed a Medicaid Expansion bill along party lines. It's future is not clear in the House, and it would appear that the Governor is not in favor with the Senate Bill. "Medicaid Madness" tour was held in four

cities on March 27 - Davenport, Mason City, Cedar Rapids and Ottumwa. There will be an event in Dubuque.

Accepting Medicaid expansion would cover an additional 150,000 Iowans - uninsured young adults, veterans, the working poor, and mentally ill. The Governor's yet-to-be-seen plan would cost more while providing fewer Iowans with health security they need.

In addition to learning more about Medicaid expansion at these events, Iowans are encouraged to sign the petition at www.healthiestiowa.com.

IOWA FEDERATION OF LABOR, AFL-CIO

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Upcoming ...

- April 1—Clinton WIN
- April 2—Sioux City WIN
- April 3—Iowa City WIN
- April 8—Burlington and Cedar Rapids WIN
- April 9—Davenport WIN
- April 11—FMLA Class Labor Center
- April 17—Muscatine and Council Bluffs WIN
- April 18—Dubuque and Mason City WIN
- April 23—Keokuk WIN
- April 24—Waterloo WIN
- April 25—Des Moines WIN
- April 26-29 Workers Memorial Day Events

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

2nd annual Iowa AFL-CIO Members Choice Award

Presented for the outstanding video/slide show produced by union members.

Length: 3 minutes max. **Format:** Video or slide show of pictures; music/sound/silent all acceptable

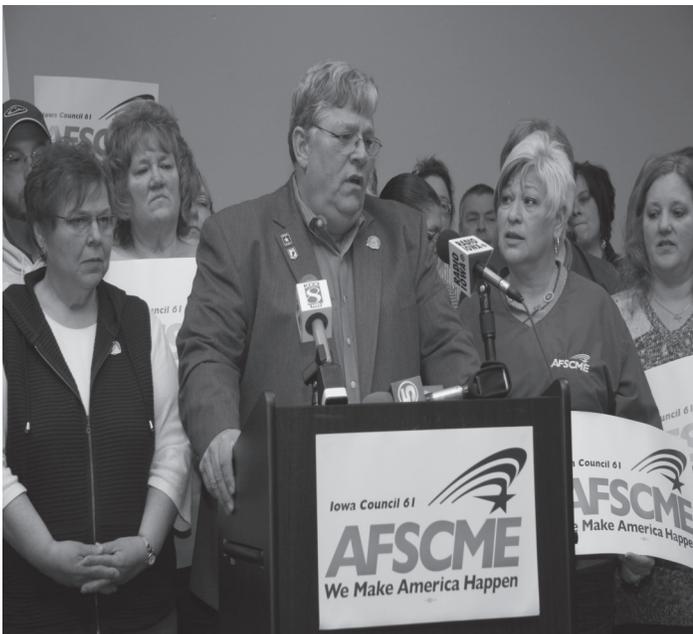
How to submit: Submit as a DVD or flash drive or email to lance@iowaaflico.org

Deadline for Submissions: August 1

For more info: Contact Lance Coles at 515-262-9571 or lance@iowaaflico.org



AFSCME: Union's Final Offer—Status Quo awarded



AFSCME, Council 61 President, Danny Homan, gives a statement to the press, after sharing the arbitration award victory with this bargaining committee

AFSCME Iowa Council 61, was forced in arbitration on the state master contract, and on March 7, the arbitrator awarded "status quo" on health insurance.

The union made a final offer, that included changes in "temporary employees" and "layoff language". The final offer was no across-the-board pay increases, but that step increases remain unchanged, and that health insurance would remain the same. The Governor rejected the final offer and it was sent to arbitration.

Arbitrator Hill's award is a "status quo" victory for state workers. AFSCME Iowa Council 61 President, Danny Homan said he believes the Governor will still come after state workers.

"We are pleased that the arbitrator recognized that the union's final offer was the most reasonable proposal and that the appropriate decision was to support AFSCME Iowa Council 61's final offer on Health Insurance," said Homan