A Tale of Two Republicans — Why We Endorse Labor Friendly Candidates

On April 23rd, local unions and different labor and trades councils from across Iowa came together to make decisions on endorsements for state House and Senate, statewide offices, Congress, and United States Senate for the Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO. We have a few steps to our endorsement process, all of which are quite easy but necessary.

In one particular race, delegates voted to endorse Republican House member Charlie McClintock, who is running for the Iowa Senate in 2022. Representative McClintock is conservative, yet he’s stood by organized labor time and time again.

The endorsements that you see in this issue for the June 7th primary were all decided by members. Not myself, nor our staff, and not even just our executive board. Every local affiliated with the Iowa Federation of Labor has the ability to weigh in on these races. What’s more, is that it takes two-thirds of the body that’s voting to make an endorsement, so a candidate must have broad support and appeal to many different unions across many different sectors to gain our support.

The questions that we ask candidates and the issues we educate both challengers and incumbents alike on, are labor issues that matter to your wallet and your families’ well-being. That’s what our criteria is. Now some members always have a belief that the union should stay silent on matters of political importance. Why in the world would we cede our voices, especially at such a critical time? That’s a misguided perception, because all of our voices matter, collectively. Because of the efforts of the Iowa Federation of Labor and our many affiliates’ voices, we had successes this year. While we were not able to stop a very bad unemployment bill, we did make sure that there was no one week waiting period for benefits being paid out. The Republican floor manager of the bill himself even noted that because of the feedback from union members, especially in the building trades, the one week wait came out of the final bill. Your voice matters, and we can win when we use it collectively.

Unless you’re rich and powerful (which most of us are not), the most important voice you have is your union card and your ballot. Unfortunately, the ballot box can be used to take away your rights at work. We’ve seen this in Iowa, and we’ve seen this across the nation. It’s time for it to end. Use your ballot wisely, and make sure that you’re supporting the candidates that support you and your rights at work.
Infrastructure, the Arts, and Puppets: A Conversation Between the Past and the Present

By Peter Rachleff, Labor Historian

President Biden’s proposed American Jobs Act has kickstarted debates about how to revive the U.S. economy in the aftermath of the pandemic, including disagreements about “what is infrastructure?” Here at the East Side Free-dom Library, we think these debates should be informed by consideration of the Works Progress Administration projects of the New Deal, particularly in the arts. Today, we’d like to focus on one program we find inspiring, the Buffalo Historical Marionettes of the WPA’s Federal Theatre Project. This project created more than 200 jobs and encouraged a diverse community to explore and engage history, including the ways that racism had shaped the present. Buffalo’s history was shaped by its location on “the Niagara Frontier,” making it a transportation and manufacturing center by the early 20th century. Immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, particularly Italians and Poles, found their way to jobs, first on the city’s docks, railways, and ships, and then in its booming steel mills, auto plants, and machine shops. When World War I and the new restriction laws of 1923-24 disrupted this immigration, thousands of African Americans moved from the South to fill the demand for industrial and service labor. By the end of the 1920s, two-thirds of the city’s white working class were immigrants and their children, while two-thirds of the city’s Black workers were Southern-born. Both of these groups faced the scorn and hostility of an energized Ku Klux Klan, which blended racism, xenophobia, and prohibition into a noxious brew.

Buffalo’s diverse working class was hard hit by the Great Depression, as unemployment grew beyond 20%. In late 1935, the federal government’s creation of the WPA brought new hope to the city’s unemployed and impoverished. One of these projects was the Buffalo Historical Marionettes under the direction of Esther Wilhelm. Their creative plays, featuring marionettes animated by White and Black puppeteers, not only put carpenters, painters, seamstresses, truck drivers, and musicians to work, but also encouraged children and adults alike to reconsider American history at a critical time. The African American performers, “the Jubilee Singers,” played three shows in repertory: Eliza Whitney and the Invention of the Cotton Gin; The Life of Stephen Foster, and Uncle Tom’s Cabin. Their name suggests their connection to the tradition of the original Fisk University Jubilee Singers. The Buffalo group was part of a nationwide network of quartets that emerged out of the WWI era northward migration, adapting their southern musical styles and practices. Prior to the Great Depression, its eight members had participated in such community institutions as churches, the Urban League’s chorus, the colored YMCA, and the Colored Musicians’ Union, itself a central institution in Buffalo’s African American community.

They brought their experiences and perspectives into the shaping of their plays. Two – Eli Whitney and the Invention of the Cotton Gin and The Life of Stephen Foster featured white protagonists who made their fame and fortune at the expense of African Americans, only to lose it all through their own foibles, the chicanery of other white people, and the property rules (patents and copyrights) of a capitalist economy. Their adaptation of Uncle Tom’s Cabin highlighted the centrality of resistance by enslaved women and men. Their the revision of the well-known story’s conclusion repre-

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ABSENTEE BY MAIL – Request Deadline for Mailed Ballots

Iowans can submit requests to receive absentee ballots by mail up to 70 days prior to election day.

2022 Primary Election first day to request absentee ballot by mail is Tuesday, March 29.

The request form for the 2022 Primary Election must be received in your county auditor’s office by 5:00 PM CST on Monday, May 23, 2022.

Auditor mails you absentee Ballots no sooner than 20 days before election day (May 19th). For ballot replacement, allow “several” days before you contact the county auditor.

Monday, May 23th, 2022 is the last day to request a ballot to be mailed to you.

Saturday, June 4th, when the Auditor’s Office is open for absentee voting.

The last day to vote at the Auditor’s Office is Monday, June 6th:

To Vote At the polls on election day, June 7th, will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

RETURNING THE BALLOT

Mark your ballot, follow the instructions included with the ballot - return it in the postage-paid return envelope. It is vital that you utilize the return envelope supplied by the county auditor.

Mail your ballot so that is received before 8 PM CT on Election Day – June 7

Hand deliver your ballot to your county auditor during business hours or any time up until 8 PM CST on Election Day – June 7

You may designate someone to return your ballot under one of following circumstances:

• The designee is an immediate family member.

• The designee is a member of your household.

• You are disabled and you have designed someone to return your ballot.

Surrender your absentee ballot at your precinct polling place on Election Day and vote a regular ballot;

Victory provisional ballot at the polls on Election Day if you cannot surrender your voted absentee ballot.

Voted absentee ballots cannot be delivered to the polling place on election day.

TRACKING THE BALLOT

After the request form is received by the county auditor - Track the status of an absentee ballot. To get a ballot status update: https://sos.iowa.gov/elections/absentee/ballotstatus/absentee/search

For the 2022 General Election, the first day to request an absentee ballot by mail is Tuesday, August 30, 2022.
The Secretary-Treasurer's Notes...

Don't Be Distracted or Misdirected

IFL Secretary Treasurer
Peter Hird

Let's not let national politics and campaign centered legislation from this session distract us from what has happened in the last several years. We have seen some of the worst legislation in the country for workers here in Iowa. The current leadership in our state prioritizes cutting worker protections, exploiting our children to fix a child care crisis, and a flat tax that far more benefits the wealthiest Iowans and corporations. They don't campaign on busting unions, rolling back child labor laws, denying public education, cutting earned unemployment benefits, and removing other worker protections, but they have been doing it for the last sixty years.

What amazes me is the boldness of those politicians as they generalize the impact on people to defend their beloved corporate friends. In the beginning of the session, the Governor said that workers used the unemployment system as a hammock in a speech to the entire state. We all knew what he was alluding to. Even though workers in the state worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic and tens of thousands of people lost their jobs as businesses closed, somehow they became the ones to blame. In subcommittees, the lobbyists of Iowa's biggest businesses were there banging the drum of unemployment cuts. John Deere, MidAmerican, Hy-Vee, Wells Fargo and Facebook may not have been in the room, but their lobbyists from the Association of Business and Industry was. Another group, National Federation of Independent Business, the self-declared voice of small businesses, lobbies in opposition to several of our long time labor priorities including the Build Back Better Act that increases fines on “small employers for overtime, minimum wage, OSHA, and National Labor Relations Act violations”.

Don't be misdirected in the unemployment discussion. This is about forcing people into jobs they don't want and to lower the tax rate of businesses. The unemployment bill cut maximum benefit weeks from twenty-six to sixteen, redefined the definition of misconduct, which will end up denying more individuals unemployment, and changed the rules of when you must take a lower paying job in the course of your search for new employment. One thing they weren't able to get, an extra one week waiting period before collecting the first benefit check, was only stopped because of Iowa's labor movement and their allies. Because of the work you all did, TWENTY-FOUR MILLION DOLLARS won't be taken from workers who lose their job at no fault of their own. The reality is, you don't get unemployment if you don't work. Nearly everyone who wants to work is working, and those that left the workforce aren't on unemployment insurance. Iowa lost tens of thousands of workers over the last two years. There are numerous reasons: low wages, lack of flexibility in hours, lack of paid time off and one of the biggest reasons we hear about...child care issues. A parent has to compare the cost of child care to what their job is providing in wages, benefits, and working conditions. A problem nearly every parent is confronted with is paying for child care for only two kids, takes two fifty hour paychecks and costs eighteen hundred dollars per month.

So, what does the Governor and the legislative leadership do? Pass bills to lower the cost of care for every family? No. Incentivize businesses to pay workers more? No. Create a statewide paid leave program to help create a more stable work-family balance? No. What they did was pass a bill to lower the unsupervised age of child care center workers from eighteen years of age to sixteen years of age, and increase the amount of two and three year-olds that can be under the supervision of a daycare center staff member. Under this legislation, three sixteen year-olds could be watching up to thirty three year-old kids with no adult supervision. To call this a band-aid wouldn't do it justice. At least a band-aid would help protect us from further damage.

The policies of Iowa leadership are driven by corporate money making ideas. The bill to move us to a flat-tax sounds good to many people, but the devil is in the details. Everyone pays the same tax percentage, right? Well initially they do until the tax deductions start to pile on. Two middle class workers who provide for their family don't get a lot of tax deductions. Those with lots of extra money can keep more by putting money into retirement accounts and deducting an extravagant home mortgage. This tax is for the one-percenter. The people and corporations that make the most.

As of the time of writing this article the legislature is still in session, more than two weeks after the proposed last day. The Senate and the Governor are holding the legislature hostage as they try to force private school vouchers down the throat of Iowans who overwhelmingly reject them. I understand that fighting this fight can seem hopeless; this session has been another bad one. What I've learned is, your voice does matter. I had a legislator who was for cutting unemployment benefits tell me they have only heard from unions about the bill. He never heard from any one representing “the non-union workers.” That person didn’t get it. They don’t even understand that workers without a union has no one lobbying for them. We are the voice of every worker. If we don’t speak up, the livelihoods of one and a half million workers are dictated by the employers, in the workplace and at the capitol.

Your vote matters too. If it didn’t, the billion dollar corporate super PACs wouldn’t be trying to bust our unions and run negative ads about our endorsed candidates. We can’t get caught up in the manufactured political hoaxes that divide us as we try to build a better union. There are no cat litter boxes in schools so we are and have forever been in battle with greed in this country. It’s time to further build our group of allies and protect the American dream that previous generations of union members fought and died for.
Working Families Join Demonstrations

By Holly Sagar

“Safe jobs save lives, keep the promise alive” on the 39th annual Workers Memorial Day (WMD). This year also marks the 53rd anniversary of the establishment of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the right of workers to safe jobs.

On Thursday, April 28th, for Workers Memorial Day, working families from across the state, will gathered to honor workers who were injured, killed or made sick on the job in Iowa in 2020 and 2021, and to call for stronger laws protecting workers’ health and safety. The COVID-19 pandemic devastated working families and highlighted the fundamental right to and importance of a safe job for every worker. Community and elected leaders will join union members to call for laws that will “measure up” to the promise of worker safety.

The observation was one of hundreds around the world as working families and union members commemorate brothers and sisters who died on the job for the annual Workers Memorial Day.

Iowa families lost more than 70 lives to workplace related fatalities and illnesses in 2020 and 2021.

Infrastructure, the Arts, and Puppets: A Conversation Between the Past and the Present

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sented emancipation as an outcome of Black agency. As in the widely-read 1853 Harriet Beecher Stowe novel, when Uncle Tom overcomes his conditioning as an obedient slave by refusing to reveal where Eliza has gone, he is whipped to death by overseer Simon Legree. But, departing from the text’s heartbreaking ending, the Buffalo play added a scene, one in which a puppet of Abraham Lincoln floats over Tom’s crumpled body, reciting the Emancipation Proclamation, voiced by an African American performer. Tom has not died in vain. With audiences left to contemplate this image, the Jubilee Singers closed the curtain and descended from the bridge to take their bow. Revealed at last, large as life WPA/FTP workers, citizens of the Buffalo community, African Americans. They embodied what those miniature figures had represented. And they had controlled the strings.

This rarely told story suggests that federal funding of “infrastructure” can not only build much-needed bridges and broadband cables, can not only create a wide range of jobs for a wide range of working women and men, but it can also create the contexts for conversations between the past and the present which can help us chart our course to a better future for all of us.

The East Side Freedom Library is committed to hosting and convening these conversations, online and in person. Sometimes we even host puppet plays as conversation starters! Join us on Saturday, June 19, at 11am, when the Open Eye Figure Theater will bring a story of Vietnamese-American children, “The Amazing Cowboat” to our front lawn.

Working Families Join Demonstrations Nationwide for WMD

Pray for the Dead and Fight Like Hell for the Living!
— Mother Jones

— Mother Jones
What We Really Need to Talk About

By Al Womble,
IFL Political Director

Usually when people talk about elections they talk about Republicans versus Democrats. However, that is not the reality we exist in. We need to talk about labor friendly candidates and Anti Labor candidates. We need to talk about those who are fighting for workers rights and their fair share and to those who are defenders of corporate greed.

When we take a look at the current Anti Labor party that controls our state government there is a lot of harm they have done, not just to unions, but to all working class Iowans everywhere. In 2017 they stripped Chapter 20 and workers compensation. In the previous general assembly they passed restrictions that not only make it harder to vote, but they also made it harder for us to reach out to our members, who do not have the time or ability to get to a polling station, and assist them in turning in their ballots. This year they clearly are telling us that the education of only 10,000 private school students around the state of Iowa is far more important to support and fund than the nearly half million of the students of working class families. Finally, in an era of record corporate profits and stagnant wage growth the Defenders of Corporate Greed decided they needed to engineer large tax breaks that will largely benefit the wealthiest among us and to cut unemployment benefits in order to create more savings on corporate taxes.

Last year we saw our sisters and brothers of the UAW stand up to corporate greed and say, “Enough!” You are making record profits off our labor, while putting us in hazardous working conditions and attacking our pensions!?” The stance against corporate greed had massive support from communities all around the state of Iowa as people have finally had enough of those who are the Takers, not the Makers. These words have been held up as truth as other regular people have stood up and shouted, “Enough!” which lead to strikes in other areas and industries.

None of the Anti-Labor officials currently at the state house ran on cutting Chapter 20, cutting Workers Compensation, funding the wealthiest among us to send their kids to private schools, or cutting unemployment, but they took those steps anyway and hurt working class families all over the state. It is now time for us to decide that these elections are about supporting labor friendly candidates and those who fight for working families rights and to get their Fair Share! It is time for us to stand up and to say no more to those who support corporate greed, no more to people who tilt the scales to the wealthy and powerful and no more to your time in office. It is time to vote for labor friendly candidates who will fight for the Makers, Not the Takers.

NEW REPORT: Iowa Working Families Can't Afford Corporate Kim's Agenda

Des Moines, Iowa -- Progress Iowa Executive Director Matt Si
novic issued the following statement in response to Common Good
Iowa’s new report, The Cost of Liv
ing in Iowa 2022:

“Iowans work hard, but things
are tough right now because of
Corporate Kim Reynolds. It’s hard
to take care of ourselves, let alone
each other. And today’s report from
Common Good Iowa reaffirmed
what we already know. The things
that cost and matter the most -- a
roof over our heads, childcare for
our kids, healthcare for our fami-
lies -- have long been put out of
reach.

“According to today’s report, ‘Iowa workers have to earn well
over the minimum wage, and in
some cases well above the state’s
median wage, to meet even an ex-
ceptionally frugal basic-needs bud-
get.’ We know the reason hard-
working Iowans just can’t get ahead
is because Corporate Kim Reynolds
and other Republicans have made it
impossible.

“By blocking wage increases and
siding with corporations that don’t
pay enough, Reynolds is hurting
our families and forcing people to
leave rural Iowa. Even as workers
struggle, she and Republicans are
stripping workers of earned unem-
ployment benefits, forcing Iowans
into low paying jobs. At the same
time, Reynolds continues to give
the rich and wealthy businesses tax
breaks, while taking money away
from our public schools, public
safety, and health care services, ex-
cerating her workforce crisis.

“We can’t survive like this. We
need real leaders who stand with
working people - not those who
hand out kickbacks to corporations.
We need to pass laws to stop corpo-
rate price gouging, curb education
debt, make childcare and healthcare
affordable, and raise our wages.”

Midwest Labor Press
Association Conference

October 24-26, 2022
VIA Zoom
Lessons from Amazon and Starbucks

By Jay Smith & Dennis McElwain

There is not a lot of good news coming out of the Iowa Legislature this session. As expected, the major- ity party has continued its assault on Iowa’s workers, which began with the gutting of Chapter 20 and workers’ compensation in 2017, and has continued over the last five years with the newest assault on Iowa’s unemployment compensation system. Nonetheless, however, it is important to set aside the bad and find some good.

Somewhat surprisingly, we can find the good with the organizing of Starbucks and Amazon at the Amazon distribution center in Long Island, New York. Starbucks and Amazon are two unique, national brands in the United States. Coupled with that unique, national branding is the typical corporate anti-union stance. Nonetheless, some brave workers decided enough was enough, and they decided to take a stand. There are some important lessons from these campaigns.

As anyone associated with the Labor Movement knows, for the last forty years, corporate America has steadily whittled away labor’s pow- er. Through the closure of plants and factories, the number of workers divided by the number of workers classified as workers, and hard- knocked anti-union campaigns, corporate America has taken aim at dividing workers by making work- ers believe that unions have nothing to offer.

With the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, corporate American be- gan to show workers what the Labor Movement has understood all along, and that is, for the most part, big business simply views workers as a mode of production—some- times as factory workers, the backbone of a well-rounded workforce, which makes it difficult to organize indi- viduals into a union to bargain at the workplace.

Similarly, due to the nature of the work at Amazon distribution cen- ters, which creates a high amount of turnover amongst employees, it has been difficult for organized labor to get a foot in the door. Nonetheless, despite these obsta- cles, the workers at many Starbucks locations and the Amazon distribu- tion centers have been able to organize and secure victories through persistent organizing campaigns.

This realization began in Strik- etober, as the Iowa Labor Movement knows, in examples such as the top John Deere strike. But, the realization did not stop with workers who were organized, it spilled over to employ- ees who worked for such employers as Starbucks and Amazon where, until now, workers have found it difficult to come together to use their collective voices. Organizing fast-food (or fast-coffee) employers is inherently difficult. The number of workers, the number of part-time workers, and the high turnover rate makes it difficult to organize indi- viduals into a union to bargain at the workplace.

Lessons from Amazon and Starbucks is simple, but it is something that we sometimes forget when we struggle to fend off the constant attack from anti-union forces. And, that is, to grow our numbers, to have successful cam- paigns, and to make life better for American workers, we must work to defeat those who feel empowered, and that they have a stake in the outcome. If we remember this lesson, Starbucks and Amazon will come to represent the beginning of a new era for the Labor Movement.
The Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO held its Committee on Political Education (C.O.P.E) Convention, April 23, in Des Moines, Iowa this past weekend. This is the formal step in the process to evaluate candidates for the first round of endorsements for the 2022 election cycle.

“The Iowa Federation of Labor endorsement process is very democratic. Local labor councils evaluate and recommend endorsements to the state organization, where they must get two-thirds support to get an endorsement,” said Charlie Wishman, President of the Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO. “We consider all candidates who go through our endorsement process, and they are vetted as well by those in local AFL-CIO chapters. The Iowa Federation of Labor is looking for candidates, regardless of party, who are committed to advancing policies that are in the best interests of all working people and who want to reverse the anti-worker course that this state has been on for some time. We have endorsed both Republicans and Democrats this cycle, and stand with those who stand with us.”

Additional endorsements may be made as candidate questionnaires are completed and returned. IFL Secretary-Treasurer Pete Hird noted, “Some candidates do not engage in our endorsement process for one reason or another, which effectively eliminates them from endorsement opportunities with our organization. Our program requires candidates to tell us where they stand on issues important to working Iowans before we will support them as well as to learn about the issues that are important to and matter to organized labor.”

Some candidates were not endorsed at this time, but can be considered at a later date for endorsement.

**FEDERAL**

**US Senate:** Former Congresswoman Abby Finkenauer

**First District Congress:** State Representative Christina Bohannon

**Second District Congress:** State Senator Liz Mathis

**Third District Congress:** Congresswoman Cindy Axne

**Fourth District Congress:** Ryan Melton

**STATEWIDE**

**Governor:** Deidre DeJear

**Secretary of State:** Joel Miller

**Auditor of State:** Rob Sand

**Treasurer of State:** Mike Fitzgerald

**Secretary of Agriculture:** John Norwood

**Iowa House Endorsements:**

**HD 1:** J.D. Scholten

**HD 2:** Steve Hansen

**HD 6:** James Eliason

**HD 19:** Verargarie Sanford

**HD 20:** Josh Turek

**HD 21:** Joe Kerner

**HD 25:** Diana Swartz

**HD 27:** Kenan Judge

**HD 28:** Sonya Heitshusen

**HD 29:** Brian Meyer

**HD 30:** Megan Srinivas

**HD 32:** Jennifer Konfrst

**HD 33:** Ruth Ann Gaines

**HD 34:** Ako Abdul Samad

**HD 35:** Sean Bagnewski

**HD 36:** Gabriel De La Cerda

**HD 39:** Rick Olson

**HD 40:** MacKenzie Bills

**HD 41:** Molly Buck

**HD 42:** Heather Matson

**HD 43:** Suresh Reddy

**HD 44:** John Forbes

**HD 46:** Bridget Carberry Montgomery

**HD 47:** Gary Overla

**HD 48:** Penny Vossler

**HD 50:** Ross Wilburn

**HD 52:** Sue Cahill

**HD 53:** Sarah Smith

**HD 59:** Sharon Steckman

**HD 61:** Timi Brown-Powers

**HD 62:** Jerome Amos Jr.

**HD 63:** Tim Lecander

**Iowa Senate Endorsements:**

**SD 1:** Jackie Smith

**SD 11:** Lisa Fleishman

**SD 14:** Sarah Trone Garriott

**SD 16:** Claire Celsi

**SD 17:** Izaah Knox

**SD 19:** Tyler Stewart

**SD 21:** Todd Zahorik

**SD 23:** Matt Pries

**SD 25:** Herman Quirmbach

**SD 30:** Whitney Mixdorf

**SD 33:** Matt Robinson

**SD 35:** Joe Brown

**SD 37:** Molly Donahue

**SD 39:** Joe Zahorik

**SD 40:** Todd Taylor

**SD 41:** Deb Vandergaast

**SD 42:** Charlie McClintock - (Primary Only)

**SD 43:** Zach Whals

**SD 45:** Janice Weiner

**SD 46:** Kevin Kinney

**SD 47:** Mary Kathleen Figaro

**SD 49:** Cindy Winckler