

# PRESS ASSOCIATES UNION NEWS SERVICE

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Press Associates, Inc. (PAI) – 10/18/2013

## UNION LEADERS WELCOME END OF FEDERAL SHUTDOWN, LIFTING OF DEBT LIMIT

WASHINGTON (PAI)—Union leaders welcomed Congress' end of the 2-week partial federal shutdown/lockout and the decision to raise the nation's debt limit, thus avoiding what would have been a first-ever default by the U.S.

But one leader, **American Federation of Government Employees President J. David Cox**, also warned we could be right back in the same partisan soup in three months when the legislation mandating those two moves expires.

And another, the **United Food and Commercial Workers**, said an unscrupulous employer in D.C.'s Virginia suburbs used the shutdown – which shuttered the National Labor Relations Board among other agencies – to illegally fire 30 pro-union workers.

“On behalf of the 670,000 federal employees represented by AFGE, I am thrilled a deal was reached to put our members back to work and restore the services American taxpayers count on,” said Cox, most of whose members were locked out of their jobs for more than two weeks. Cox repeatedly calls the shutdown a lockout.

“Thousands could not manage through the shutdown on goodwill alone, and they lost their apartments, daycare slots, and good credit scores.

“Make no mistake about it: This is not a happy day for federal employees. The Senate deal is simply a brief reprieve from the suffering federal employees and their families endured for the past 16 days. We cannot accept another government shutdown in just a few short weeks. Federal workers and the public they serve have suffered enough,” Cox declared.

The lockout, caused by Tea Party demands that any law funding the government must also “de-fund” the 2010 Affordable Care Act – the Tea Party insultingly calls the law “Obamacare” – idled at least 800,000 federal workers starting on Oct. 1.

When that tactic failed, the Tea Party schemed to block the debt limit increase. No hike in the debt limit would have caused the U.S. to default on its bond interest payments and stop payments to Social Security recipients, veterans, workers, vendors and more. Cox, a Veterans Affairs Department worker on leave, concentrated on the impact on both moves on the workers and the public.

“Countless federal workers have been forced to choose between paying their mortgage and feeding their families, between buying gas to get to work or paying the electric company,” Cox said. “Countless members have called me in tears looking for answers to the financial burden this reckless shutdown has put on their families.

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(shutdown, cont. -2)

“Federal workers are also deeply frustrated by the impact the shutdown has had on their ability to serve the public,” he said. They wanted “to go to work and provide for their families and their country, but were turned away by shameless politics.

“When federal employees look back on this fiasco, they will remember the veterans who were prevented from filing for disability benefits, the patients turned away from cancer treatment trials, polluters who were left to foul the air and water, the miners who died from lack of Mine Safety and Health Administration enforcement. They will think of the homebuyers who couldn’t apply for mortgages, the soldiers who had to make do until weapons were repaired and delivered.

“The economic and social costs of shutting down vital government services for weeks will be felt for months and possibly years. Backlogs will eventually be processed, and federal workers’ savings will slowly be restored. But the taint of this outrageous effort to undermine the Affordable Care Act will likely affect government service for a long time,” he predicted.

Cox also asked voters to remember who – the Tea Party – was responsible for the chaos. After thanking Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., for holding firm against “a radical group of hostage takers,” Cox said that “those who perpetrated this inexcusable catastrophe on the American people should be turned out of office in 2014.”

Cox also vowed his union and its members “are nobody’s bargaining chip” and will not be scapegoats or asked to shoulder even more cuts. The federal workers have already endured 11 days of furloughs due to “sequestration” – Washingtonese for GOP-imposed budget cuts – and a 3-year pay freeze.

“Our message to lawmakers is clear: No more cuts, no more furloughs, no more sacrifices on the backs of hardworking Americans. We will also fight to protect Social Security and Medicare benefits from any reductions, including cuts from the so-called chained CPI,” Cox stated. **Service Employees President Mary Kay Henry agreed.**

“While the deal announced today is a short-term fix to a crisis manufactured by the far Right Wing of the Republican Party, it should not be the end of the debate over our fiscal priorities,” **Henry said.** “Devastating cuts under the sequester remain in effect and Congress in the coming months should restore funding to vital services that millions of Americans depend on and make new investments to get our economy moving again.

“Fortunately, today’s deal does not significantly impact the Affordable Care Act,” Henry added. Reid, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., “Democrats and reasonable Republicans deserve credit for not allowing far right extremists to undercut a law that will expand healthcare coverage to millions of Americans,” Henry declared.

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(shutdown, cont. -3)

**The Food and Commercial Workers** reported the Bestway grocery in Falls Church, Va., used the shutdown as an excuse to fire 30 workers after a majority of Bestway employees signed union representation election authorization cards in September. Bestway broke labor law, UFCW Local 400 said, knowing full well that a shuttered National Labor Relations Board was powerless to press charges.

“Bestway ignored the workers’ requests to recognize their union and set bargaining dates. Instead, the company engaged in systematic illegal retaliation against union supporters by cutting hours, changing schedules, holding 1-on-1 interrogation meetings, and threatening to call immigration on the workers, among other scare tactics. When the workers staged a 1-hour work-stoppage last week to draw attention to their plight, Bestway retaliated against its staff” with the firings, Local 400 added.

**Steelworkers President Leo Gerard** also vowed voters would remember next November.

“For the past two weeks, the American people watched helplessly as the extreme Right-Wing Tea Party Republicans hijacked government and turned the Capitol into a circus,” he said. “We are thankful that this unnecessary government shutdown is now over, but in the end, it was nothing more than a colossal waste of time and money -- some \$24 billion according to Standard & Poor’s -- by people who should know better.

“This shameless group of Republicans took it upon themselves to attempt to overturn the results of our democratic process...We know this shutdown and the threat of default left hundreds of thousands of working Americans wondering how they would pay their bills, and left millions of others to wonder whether their government would be there when they needed it. The American people deserve better.

“Our leaders must remember elections have consequences...For a small minority of elected officials to attempt to nullify the results” of last year’s election “by holding the entire government and the world economy hostage is not only irresponsible, it is reprehensible.

“When we return to the voting booth next year to elect a new Congress, we must not forget the actions we have seen in recent weeks, nor the harm that these representatives have inflicted upon this country in their shortsighted, selfish efforts to impose their extreme ideology on all of us.”

The end came near 5 p.m. on Oct. 16, after Reid and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Kent., announced the deal at noon. House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, threw in the towel, saying he would not prevent a vote on it there, despite the outraged howls of his Tea Party wing. Boehner vowed to keep fighting to kill the Affordable Care Act.

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FOR THE RECORD: AFL-CIO PRESIDENT TRUMKA'S  
STATEMENT ON END OF THE FEDERAL SHUTDOWN

WASHINGTON (PAI)—AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka issued the following statement on Oct. 17, the day some 800,000 federal workers reported back to their jobs after a 16-day lockout/shutdown due to congressional refusal to fund the government.

The lockout ended when Senate leaders reached a compromise to fund the government through early next year, but at the lower “sequestration” levels the GOP previously imposed. Sequestration has led to unpaid furlough days and service cuts.

The GOP-run House then approved the compromise, but mostly by a 198-0 vote from its Democratic minority. House Republicans, under sway of the Tea Party, opposed it, 87-144. The Democratic-run Senate approved it by a bipartisan vote 81-18.

“Finally -- after more than two weeks of government shutdown, with hundreds of thousands of Americans out of work and billions of dollars in avoidable losses -- Republican leaders have stood down,” Trumka’s statement said.

“While it is good news that we avoided a crisis, we all know it should never have happened. No party or faction inside a party should hold our economy hostage to extract political gains. We commend (Democratic) President Obama, (Senate Democratic) Majority Leader Reid, and the leadership of the Democratic Party for standing firm and resisting extortion.

“Now that we survived this self-inflicted catastrophe, perhaps we can move on to address urgent national priorities. We must pass comprehensive immigration reform, so that 11 million aspiring Americans are no longer second-class citizens and the rights of all workers are protected. We need to grow our way out of a slow economy by investing in infrastructure, creating good jobs with good benefits and rebuilding our struggling middle class.

“In order to create good jobs we cannot continue to give tax breaks to companies that outsource jobs. Building economic security also means making retirement for millions of Americans more secure -- and not cutting benefits for critical programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

“We desperately need to create an economy that works for all. The across-the-board sequester cuts hamper that effort and must be repealed. We need to focus on big ideas and the future – rather than getting bogged down in petty political battles. Working families deserve better.”

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## MANAGEMENT REFUSAL TO NEGOTIATE ITS WORK RULE DEMANDS FORCES BART WORKERS TO STRIKE

SAN FRANCISCO (PAI)—Management refusal to negotiate on its own work rule demands – demands the unions say could impact worker safety – forced workers for the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit System (BART) to strike at 12:01 a.m. Oct. 18.

The workers, members of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1225 and Service Employees Local 1021, had to walk off the job, Local 1021 President Roxanne Sanchez said. She added the two unions would be willing to submit their disagreements with BART managers to binding interest arbitration.

One BART worker told National Public Radio the dispute went far beyond “work rules.” He said management sought changes that would impact safety and noted two workers have died on the job in the last several years. Other workers said management wants to restrict workers’ rights.

“Over the last several nights, all of us -- workers, elected officials, the federal mediators, the media and, most importantly, our riders -- have been played by a management team simply unwilling to settle the contract,” Sanchez said as she left the final 30-hour bargaining session late on Oct. 17.

“At this point, we have come to an overall understanding on economics. However, in the end, BART management is withholding settlement because they want to fundamentally and significantly change the conditions under which we work.

“Time and time again, after we made a concession, management would move the goal posts, including now -- after reaching a general agreement on economics -- demanding changes in work place rules that historically protected workers from issues like abuse of power, unfair treatment and sexual harassment.

“Given how close we are to settlement, we are willing to take the unprecedented step of agreeing to voluntary binding interest arbitration on the specific outstanding issues of workday and workweek scheduling and wage schedules for utility workers and system service workers.”

As she left the talks, Sanchez told local media that “we made concessions, but you can only bend so far before you break. This is the way they want to solve the conflict, in a fight, a street fight.” ATU Local 1225 President Steve Ramirez left the spokeswoman’s role to Sanchez.

Management had no specific response to the two unions, other than to complain that they were being inflexible.

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## OSHA FINES NEW YORK FIRMS FOR NO FALL PROTECTION; PRIOR STUDY SHOWS COST IS BIG REASON FOR LACK

NEW YORK (PAI)—Some \$272,000 in Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) fines against four New York City-area construction contractors points up – once again – how many such firms cut corners against fall protection.

The fines, most of which were levied against one firm in suburban Mamaroneck, highlighted lack of fall protection and preventive scaffolding for workers, among other OSHA violations. The violations were on a hotel construction project in Manhattan.

But the violations also come after a new study by an engineering group reports such holes in the safety net are common in residential construction in the Big Apple, with 41% of 197 job sites surveyed showing lack of fall protection for workers.

The holes in the construction safety net occur nationwide, according to a website posting from the Center to Protect Workers Rights (CPWR), the job safety arm of the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department.

“Almost every working day somewhere in the United States a workplace fall takes the life of a man or woman in the building industry,” says CPWR’s Tom Stafford, the department’s safety and health director in a website statement. “Every year more than 10,000 construction workers suffer serious injuries from falls.”

The American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) report, published in a peer-reviewed journal, *Professional Safety*, said falls cause 64% of residential construction industry on-the-job deaths, and all the deaths among workers toiling for framing contractors. “Despite these grim figures, workers still frequently work at heights without fall protection,” it notes. CPWR said falls produce one-third of all construction deaths.

“Safety audits showed only a 59% average compliance rate with fall protection and/or prevention measures,” the study, *Fall Prevention on Residential Construction Sites*, adds. “Specifically, the range was from 28% compliance for roof truss installations to 80% for roof sheathing.”

The study cited commercially available solutions for preventing falls through floor openings, for providing temporary walking surfaces, and for anchoring “personal fall arrest” harnesses. But “the primary concern” by contractors “to use (them) was the effect of a device on productivity,” ASSE said in a statement.

“There is a learning curve when using a new fall protection device. This can add time to the home building process, which is a major concern in the current economic environment,” ASSE adds.

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(construction falls, cont. -2)

The study also quoted contractors as saying other reasons for not installing fall protection included “lack of safe and feasible points on which to anchor a harness, resistance to changing work habits, and the lack of time, knowledge, and financial resources to implement the options.”

The study’s authors suggested contractors could overcome these hurdles to providing fall protection by renting protection equipment that had been pilot-tested for effectiveness, rather than buying it, and “contacting fall protection equipment rental companies that may be able to help contractors identify and locate the best equipment for a contractor’s situation.”

"Alternatives to unsafe work practices at heights must be identified and tested to ensure the safety of residential construction workers," the authors wrote. "Fall protection device manufacturers and the building components industry should partner to test anchorage for personal fall arrest. This will help generate definitive evidence about the safety of personal fall arrest systems in various applications."

In the New York City hotel construction case – which is a commercial building, not a residence – OSHA fined Flintlock Construction Co., of suburban Mamaroneck more than \$250,000 for its violations at the site. Three other contractors were fined up to \$22,000 combined.

Flintlock broke OSHA fall protection and scaffolding standards that exposed workers to potentially fatal falls seven times, the agency said, just before the partial federal shutdown. And it gave Flintlock three more “serious citations” on several of the violations and added the firm to its severe violators enforcement program list.

Flintlock did not provide guard rails and personal all arrest systems and did not provide a safe way to access the scaffolding. That forced workers to climb cross-bracing to reach work platforms. The platforms themselves were not fully planked and the scaffolding was not secured to prevent tipping.

OSHA also faulted Flintlock for failing to train workers on erecting the scaffold, failing to have a professional assessment of providing fall protection to workers erecting and dismantling the scaffold, for having a too-narrow walkway and for “not anchoring the fall protection system correctly.”

Stafford said CWPR has built a website, **[www.stopconstructionfalls.com](http://www.stopconstructionfalls.com)**, that serves as a home base for the center’s 2-year-old “Campaign to Prevent Falls in Construction,” conducted jointly with OSHA and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. The website includes toolbox talks, handouts, training guides, research reports, instructional videos, and news.

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Press Associates, Inc. (PAI) – 10/18/2013

## DRIVE FOR HIGHER STATE MINIMUM WAGE GAINS STEAM IN MINNESOTA

By Joey Getty, *Workday Minnesota*, Larry Sillanpa, *Duluth Labor World* and Press Associates

MINNEAPOLIS and DULUTH, Minn. (PAI)—The drive to enact a higher state minimum wage in Minnesota gained steam in mid-October with a roundtable on the issue hosted by two Democratic congressmen, and a mass march in Duluth.

At the roundtable, workers told Reps. Keith Ellison and Richard Nolan, both D-Minn., what it's like to live on \$7.25 an hour and said the state minimum wage should rise to \$9.50 – which was also the aim of the marchers in Duluth.

For the second time in this legislature, Minnesota lawmakers are considering bills to raise the minimum to the \$9.50 figure. An earlier bill foundered. The Democratic-run state house passed it, but the Democratic state senate leader disapproved of it.

Other states have not waited for the gridlock in Washington, D.C., to break and allow a hike in the federal minimum, \$7.25, which has not been raised since the George W. Bush administration. California just raised its minimum to \$10 an hour, for example.

The “Raise the Wage!” community roundtable in Minneapolis on Oct. 14 let low-wage workers to speak about their struggles as well as open up a discussion with the broader community about the campaign to raise Minnesota's minimum wage. Turnout was so great that some attendees had to stand outside the meeting room and peer through the doorway to observe the speakers.

One of the first speakers was Darcy Landau, a Delta Airlines wheelchair agent at the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport. “What I like about my job is I get to help out all kinds of people -- from the very young to the very old,” Landau said. However, he admitted that at \$7.25 an hour and with virtually no benefits, his paycheck cannot cover basic necessities such as repairing his car or chipping away at his massive student loan debt.

Lynn Nordgren, president of the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers, highlighted the problem of poverty in Minneapolis schools and its impact on student success. She noted that when a child does not have a bed, a home, reliable meals, glasses or asthma medication they need, it has a huge impact “on your social, emotional, psychological, and intellectual well-being. It would impact any of us.”

Both Nolan and Ellison have supported raising the federal minimum wage to \$10.50 an hour. “Our federal government funds more low-wage jobs than McDonald's and Wal-Mart put together. So we've got a national crisis,” Ellison added. By a party-line vote, the House GOP majority voted down that hike to \$10.50, earlier this year.

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(Minn. minimum wage, cont. -2)

Both congressmen also stated that raising the minimum wage is a good first step in a long line of changes needed to help the U.S. economy.

The Minnesota House passed HB92, raising the minimum to \$9.50, earlier this year. At the start of the 2014 legislative session, the state Senate will have the opportunity to pass the bill, which would raise the minimum wage that high by August 2015.

The same day as the Minneapolis roundtable, the effort to increase Minnesota's minimum wage came to Duluth, as more than 75 people marched through windy, lake-effect weather to Canal Park, where they were met by an equal number for a rally.

Organized by labor, the events drew a cross section of society, from Duluth Mayor Don Ness to minimum wage workers.

"It's great that our march went past Grandma's restaurant because their president, Brian Daugherty, is always at the legislature saying business can't afford to raise the minimum wage," said North East Area Labor Council President Alan Netland. "Well, we're here to say the minimum wage, about \$15,800 a year for a full-time worker, isn't enough to raise a family, and a raise would help business because the working poor have to spend the little money they earn."

Ness spoke briefly, saying a lot of working folks in Duluth live in poverty, working in the service sector. "If you work 40 hours a week you shouldn't have to live in poverty," Ness told the crowd to cheers.

Cantaré Davunt is one of the working poor in northern Minnesota and she has a college degree. She works at Wal-Mart and another job but has a difficult time paying her bills, let alone her student loans. Her father is retired from the military and he also works a minimum wage job. He's had a 25-cent raise in seven years.

"A minimum wage job is the best you can hope for in our small community," Davunt told the gathering. "The people of America have a right to be able to live the dream of equality and prosperity. We need to fix the America we live in. It's time to take action on the minimum wage!"

State Rep. Jason Metsa, DFL-Virginia, a leader in the Minnesota House that passed a bold bill to increase the minimum wage, said it would also improve the state's economy. That bill would have raised the wage to \$10.50 an hour, indexed it to inflation, preserved a ban on the tip penalty, set the work week to 40 hours, and guaranteed maternity and paternity leave. But the conservative Senate would have none of it under DFL (Democratic-Farmer-Labor) Majority Leader Tom Bakk.

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(Minn. minimum wage, cont. -3)

“We can improve the state’s economy by \$470 million by increasing the minimum wage,” Metsa said. “And contrary to what you hear, 77% of those working minimum wage jobs are over 20 years old. An honest day’s wage is not going to be coming from corporate America.” He vowed to carry the pay raise bill again in the session that begins in February.

State Rep. Mike Sundin, DFL-Esko, said corporate cannibalism and its race to the bottom must end so we can restore dignity to the low wage workers who take care of our young, elderly, and do other low-wage jobs.

“If we raise the minimum wage more towards a living wage, we can reduce the number of working poor that need public subsidies to survive,” Sundin said. “And we’ll actually help businesses” by sending more customers through their doors.

Sundin countered the business complaint that raising the minimum wage in Minnesota will drive jobs away because businesses will leave. He said Minnesota has a \$6.15 state hourly minimum, but Wisconsin’s is \$7.25, the Dakotas are both \$7.25, and Michigan’s is \$7.40. Most of those states also pay overtime after 40 hours of work.

Ellison and Nolan had planned to march in Duluth, but had to leave for D.C. after the Minneapolis roundtable. ###

## STUDY: MORE THAN HALF OF FAST-FOOD WORKERS NEED PUBLIC AID

NEW YORK (PAI)—Some 52% of the nation’s fast food workers are paid so little and have so few benefits that they need some form of public aid – from housing subsidies to Medicaid to food stamps – to get by, a new study says.

Using census data, the National Employment Law Project calculates taxpayer aid for the fast food workers at the 10 biggest chains alone totals \$3.8 billion yearly. One-third, \$1.2 billion, aided the 707,000 McDonald’s workers. The study notes McDonald’s had \$5.46 billion in profits last year, paid an equivalent sum in dividends and stock buybacks and paid its CEO \$13.7 million. The 10 chains earned \$7.44 billion combined.

The study comes as fast food workers nationwide, mobilized by union-backed organizations, have staged successful 1-day walkouts from their eateries – especially at federally funded facilities – demanding their employers pay them a living wage of \$15 hourly and let them vote on unionization without employer interference.

"It doesn't matter whether you work or shop at McDonald's or not, the low-wage business model is expensive for everybody," said NELP policy analyst Jack Temple. "Companies are basically pushing off part of their costs on the taxpayers."

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'FALL OF THE FACULTY' EXPERT TELLS UNIV. OF MINN.-DULUTH UNION TO GO ON THE OFFENSIVE

By Larry Sillanpa, editor, *Duluth Labor World*

DULUTH, Minn. (PAI)—“Obstreperous” isn’t a word often associated with a teacher, much less a college professor. It more often would be used to describe a teacher’s nightmare – a noisy student who’s difficult to control.

But it was a word Benjamin Ginsberg of John Hopkins University used a number of times at his Sept. 26 presentation to University of Minnesota-Duluth faculty, members of the University Education Association/Education Minnesota, the joint American Federation of Teachers-NEA affiliate in Minnesota.

Ginsberg urges all university faculty to become obstreperous in dealing with their administrations. Author of 24 books on a wide range of subjects, Ginsberg’s book, *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why it Matters*, led UEA to invite him to campus. His book explains a phenomenon they know all too well.

“It’s been with us for 40 years,” said Steven Matthews, who leads the university’s History Department and led the forum. “This is what we need to do – bring in speakers to talk about important issues. We need a free exchange of ideas or there is no university.”

Ginsberg said universities were originally run by their faculties, who would take part-time or temporary jobs in administering their schools.

“Deans planned to go back to being faculty,” he said. The joke was “don’t do a good job or they’ll promote you.”

Today only a few universities are faculty-driven, he said. Harvard and the University of Chicago are among them and are among the best institutions in America. So what happened?

A class of professional administrators started growing. Some were faculty who failed to gain tenure. Most had little faculty experience, Ginsberg said he found out in researching his book. “Now we have many administrators who never taught a student.”

And the ratio of administration to faculty is exploding. Ginsberg found that nationally in 1965 there were 446,000 professors to 269,000 administrators and staff. By 2005 the number of professors had risen to 675,000, but administration numbers had leaped to 800,000. During that time the amount of money to pay professors had risen 128%, but administration costs rose 148%.

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(University problems, cont. -2)

Tuition costs were forced to increase to fund administration, he said -- and not to pay for the people who were actually teaching and doing the research that makes a university a university.

Ginsberg cited a 2012 research paper by Carter Hill and Robert Martin that found rising administration spending drove two-thirds of the increase in higher education costs in the past 20 years. Hill and Martin found that in terms of costs only there should be one administrator for every three faculty members, but in actuality it was two administrators to three faculty.

The recent recession produced some decline in administration numbers, Ginsberg said, but tight money has more often led to program and across-the-board cuts, harming the schools and their students.

Now faculty is seldom consulted on university matters, he adds.

“Senior administration is relatively autonomous,” he said. “We find out (decisions) in the paper.”

While numbers can point to the economic effects of administrative growth, the effect it has on the character and academic excellence of universities is even worse, Ginsberg stated.

Teaching and research is what a university should be about, he explained. All else, including buildings and extracurricular activities, is ancillary. But that is what administration uses to “bring customers to the store. They think they have to be customer-friendly and not scare prospective students and their families with such dreaded topics as calculus.”

“Administration doesn’t know what we do,” Ginsberg said of professors’ jobs. “They think one visit to a class will inform them.” He added the army of administrators sometimes does no harm, “but they can be weapons of academic destruction.”

Professional administrators learn from and mimic one another. That’s why there is a concerted effort nationally to end the tenure system for university professors. As a result only 25% to 30% of faculty are tenure-tracked.

“Tenured faculty are the trouble makers, we don’t do as we’re told, we hold meetings like this one,” Ginsberg deadpanned.

By contrast, non-tenured adjunct professors, who often must hold two or three such posts to earn enough income, need to work from administration’s play book to  
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(university problems, cont. -3)

keep their jobs. Ginsberg drew applause when he asked, “If part-time is so good why don’t we have part-time administration? Full-time faculty and adjunct administration... Without tenure there is no academic freedom...We’re about not agreeing with everyone. We need to try ideas out.”

Ginsberg said it is too late for the faculties at many universities that have been co-opted by administration, but not for the University of Minnesota-Duluth’s UEA. He urged them to develop a consciousness about their importance to UMD and not buy into administration’s appeals to their “moral sensibilities” – appeals often heard elsewhere.

Post-lecture questions implied such skepticism may already be occurring at the Minnesota institution. The university’s administration suggested a faculty governance council, which sounds good, but nominees will be chosen by the deans without a real election. “The technical term is suck-ups,” Ginsberg said.

Prioritization is another buzzword in administrators’ echo chamber. Based on a book by Robert Dickeson, the university administration wants the faculty to buy into cutting their own throats, Ginsberg said. “I don’t want to sound like a Fascist, but you should hold a book burning party. Burn that damn book! It’s turgid prose!” he declared.

“Be obstreperous,” Ginsberg told the faculty, “you’ll prevail.” That’s because administrators have a short time horizon on a campus, and faculty unrest is a career killer for the corporate headhunters hired for administrative searches.

“If they can’t keep the peace, they can’t keep a job, so have faculty turmoil – be obstreperous,” Ginsberg urged. “Oppose everything...be suspicious even if you agree.”

He recommended the faculty establish their own committees to investigate and evaluate administration, to review budgets and conduct audits, and form their own personnel committees.

“Do your own opposition research,” he said. “Dirt digging seems terrible...but it’s important. One-third of administration tells fibs on their resumes.”

In a lengthy q-&-a, Ginsberg said universities would be better run if the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, which is aimed at financial accountability, were applied to rules for university governing boards and regents to make sure there are no conflicts of interest. “There are two kinds of trustees,” Ginsberg said. “Those concerned with the business of the university and those who want to do business with the university.”

The last questioner said it sounds like faculty has to act like administration if they are to be “obstreperous.” “Yes, it’s terrible,” Ginsberg replied. “But we have to do these things if we don’t want to give up governance of our universities.” ###

Press Associates, Inc. (PAI) – 10/18/2013

## UFCW LOCALS, TWO BIG D.C.-BALTIMORE GROCERY CHAINS IN CONFRONTATION

WASHINGTON (PAI)—With two weeks to go until their contracts expire, the two United Food and Commercial Workers locals representing tens of thousands of workers at the Giant and Safeway grocery chains in the D.C.-Baltimore area are headed for a confrontation with management over a host of issues.

And Giant is already retaliating by holding open houses in Baltimore for prospective “scab” workers it intends to hire to replace members of UFCW Local 400.

In response, that local and its fellow UFCW Local 27 turned to the wider labor movement, sending an all-points letter to unions around the two metro areas. They’re asking union members to put pressure on the grocery managements to settle.

The locals are “prepared to stand up for our working families in the event of a crisis,” their letter to union colleagues said. Giant and Safeway workers “deserve middle-class wages and health and retirement security,” a sample letter to company execs adds. If the two reach an impasse, followed by a forced strike, “we are prepared to take our business elsewhere” until the unions and the chains agree, it warns.

A fact sheet the locals released shows both chains are doing well financially and can afford to pay their workers decent wages, along with covering health care and pensions. Safeway’s revenues rose last year, despite the aftereffects of the recession, to \$44.2 million, the fact sheet says. That’s slightly more than its pre-slump peak.

Giant is a subsidiary of Netherlands-based Royal Ahold, which reported \$26 million in sales last year from its U.S. subsidiaries. That’s up by \$3 million in one year.

“All in all, the company is doing even better now than they were doing in 2011 and 2012 when we launched our efforts for a fair contract. First-quarter figures indicate they’re up 3.4% in retail sales in the United States. Ahold’s focus is now on their ‘Reshaping Retail’ program,” the website adds. ###

## ROTHMAN TO RETIRE AS NEWSPAPER GUILD SECRETARY-TREASURER

WASHINGTON (PAI)—Carol Rothman, a 43-year-veteran of the newspaper business and of The Newspaper Guild, will retire as the union’s Secretary-Treasurer at the end of this year, TNG-CWA President Bernie Lunzer announced in mid-October.

“Carol has brought reason, balance and conviction to her position. It is hard for me to imagine doing this work without her,” Lunzer added. TNG staff rep Sara Steffens, a former reporter in San Jose who led the organizing drive there, will take some of Rothman’s duties, but not her title, on an interim basis until the 2015 election. ###

Press Associates, Inc. (PAI) – 10/18/2013

## INTL. UNION GROUPS JOIN STEEL WORKERS IN DRIVE TO FREE JAILED TOP COLOMBIAN LABOR LEADER

PITTSBURGH (PAI)—International union organizations are joining a drive, started by Steel Workers President Leo Gerard and USW's European union ally, Workers Uniting, to free top Colombian labor leader Huber Ballesteros "without delay."

Ballesteros is vice-president of Fensuagro, Colombia's largest farm workers union, and on the executive council of the United Workers Center (CUT), Colombia's largest labor federation. He's also an activist in trying to settle Colombia's long war against groups of insurgents – a war that made Colombia the deadliest nation in the world for unionists for the last two decades.

But Colombian police jailed Ballesteros on vague charges of "rebellion" and "financing terrorism" on August 25, as he planned to pick up a visa to fly to England. That prompted Steel Workers President Leo Gerard and Workers Uniting General Secretary Len McCluskey immediately to demand his release. In mid-October, other unions joined their movement for his freedom.

"It is somewhat alarming that in spite of assurances the current government is committed to demonstrating respect for trade unionists, opposition movements, and their activities, a trade union and peasant farmer leader as respected as Huber Ballesteros is arrested in what we understand as a clear effort to disrupt the work of the trade unions currently involved in organising industrial action in different parts of the country," Gerard and McCluskey wrote to Colombia's attorney general and its presidential human rights monitor.

"We know that since 19 August 2013 various trade unions have been organising strike action and that Mr Ballesteros, in addition to his roles in the CUT and Fensuagro, which are both involved in the strikes, was one of 10 spokespersons in the *Mesa de Interlocución y Acuerdo*, the body set up to negotiate with the government.

"Democratic protest is a fundamental part of any democracy and we are extremely concerned that one of the lead organisers and strike spokesmen has been treated in this way."

Last week, the British Trades Union Congress – the UK's equivalent of the AFL-CIO – and the online labor group LabourStart joined the drive to free Ballesteros. No response has been received from Colombia yet.

On his trip, Ballesteros had been scheduled to address the Workers United convention in September and meet lawmakers and labor leaders. Ballesteros is also a top member of the Latin American nation's Patriotic March, a coalition campaigning to make social justice a key part of any peace settlement in Colombia. ###

Press Associates, Inc. (PAI) – 10/18/2013

## FLORIDA NURSES GROUP AFFILIATES WITH OFFICE AND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES

NEW YORK (PAI)—A Florida professional nurses group that represents more than 5,000 registered nurses in the Sunshine State decided to affiliate with the Office and Professional Employees, OPEIU announced.

The organization, the Florida Nurses Association Labor and Employment Relations Council, is the labor relations arm of the FNA, which in turn represents nurses working at the University of Florida's hospital, Florida State University's hospital and in the state's professional health care unit.

The council's parent Florida Nurses Association is a state chapter of the American Nurses Association, whose D.C. staff is unionized. FNA will remain part of the ANA, the union said in its joint announcement with OPEIU on Sept. 30.

"Professional nursing associations throughout the country are recognizing the strength that comes with affiliation with OPEIU and the labor movement," said OPEIU President Michael Goodwin. "This partnership between the OPEIU and FNA will make OPEIU an even more effective representative of the nursing profession, and provide FNA with the ability to better serve its members through collective bargaining."

The Florida group will join OPEIU's Nurses Council, which represents 11,000 RNs nationwide, including nurses in Hawaii, Pennsylvania and Little Rock, Ark. The nurses council advocates best practices on patient care, nurses' personal safety and best staff-to-patient ratios in hospitals. That's especially important, Goodwin said, "as we navigate the changing healthcare system under the Affordable Care Act, to ensure our members are able to provide the highest-quality care to their patients."

## INT'L. LONGSHOREMEN'S ASSN. MEMBERS IN BALTIMORE FORCED TO STRIKE

BALTIMORE (PAI)—Citing so many conflicts with port managers that newspapers wouldn't have the space to print all of them, members of the International Longshoremen's Association were forced to strike the Port of Baltimore on Oct. 16.

Local 333 had to call the strike by its 2,000 members, and three other ILA waterfront locals, who represent another 12,000 workers in one of the nation's busiest ports, honored the picket lines.

The problems that led to the Oct. 15 breakdown in bargaining between the local and port officials were too numerous to list, longshoremen walking the picket lines said. "We're dealing with tons and tons of weight and you can die in an instant" if an accident occurs, one longshoreman told *The Baltimore Sun*. "We're tired of being violated." Unloading of five cargo ships docked in the port was halted. ###

October 18, 2013

## THE DIE-HARDS

In the end, the die-hards lost their big battle over federal spending, the Affordable Care Act, the GOP's government lockout and the federal debt – but not before they took the U.S. to the brink of financial disaster.

Their ideological rigidity bodes ill for the scenario three months from now, when the 144 die-hard House Republicans – some 80 Tea Partyites and 60-odd others – and 18 die-hard Senate Tea Partyite GOPers could stage the whole show all over again.

That's because Congress must pass another temporary money bill to keep the government going, by mid-January. Welcome to another cliffhanger.

The one silver lining in the next confrontation is the debt limit may not be part of it. The money-and-debt-limit law that Democrats finally won changes the mechanics of the debt limit section: Now Congress will have to openly vote not to raise the debt limit. If that passes – which is unlikely --Democratic President Barack Obama could veto it.

This time, after taking the country to the edge of a first-ever default on its debts, and locking out 800,000 workers for 16 days, the die-hards lost by an almost 2-to-1 ratio in the GOP-run House and by more than 4-to-1 in the Democratic-led Senate.

But they still took a few hostages: Federal spending, at least through mid-January, is still subject to the “sequester” – Washingtonese for the GOP-mandated cuts that have thrown kids out of Head Start, safety inspectors out of mines and defense workers – and others – out of one day's pay every two weeks.

The Democrats pushed for spending levels that the die-hards first forced

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through two years ago: Some \$72 billion more, government-wide, than the sequester levels. The Dems didn't get that. The government is still spending less than it must to help pull the economy out of the Great Recession, also called the Bush Crash.

And that same group of Radical Rightists forced House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, to promise he would continue to fight to kill the 2010 health care law, the Affordable Care Act. That's a promise of more legislative/political fireworks.

"While this agreement is not perfect, we are hopeful this sorry spectacle does not repeat itself again in a few months and our government can go back to doing the people's work," AFT President Randi Weingarten commented after the votes.

"But let's be clear: That a minority of Right-Wing extremists took our nation hostage to push an ideological agenda is not only unacceptable, it violates our values.

"What kind of lesson are we teaching our children when we tell them that government is supposed to work on behalf of the people but they see extremists willing to grind our nation to a halt if they don't get their way?" asked Weingarten, who, when she isn't running AFT, teaches high school social studies in New York City.

AFGE President J. David Cox, whose 600,000 members suffered from the lockout, offered a future civics lesson to the die-hards. It's called an election.

"I am glad lawmakers were able to come together to end this crisis without giving in to a radical group of hostage takers," Cox said. "Those who perpetrated this inexcusable catastrophe on the American people should be turned out of office in 2014."

In other words, remember, next November, whether your representative or senator is a die-hard, or not. Then vote accordingly. ###

Press Associates, Inc. (PAI) – 10/18/2013

## OP-ED: PLUTOCRATIC PUSH AT THE SUPREME COURT

By Sam Pizzigati

Editor, *Too Much*

WASHINGTON (PAI)--Oral arguments before the U.S. Supreme Court can be exhilarating affairs. Or dreary ones. Or sometimes even unintentionally revealing.

Take early October, for instance, when Associate Justice Antonin Scalia started opining about how unjust our society would be if people of means could stuff, in a single election cycle, no more than \$3.5 million into the pockets of their favorite political candidates. Said Scalia: "I don't think \$3.5 million is a heck of a lot of money."

Of course he wouldn't. In the circles where Scalia sits, billionaires have a constitutional right to pound the political system with all the millions at their disposal. Any move that threatens that "right" must surely leave liberty at risk.

Well, as for us, give us real liberty, not the pale plutocratic imitation that so enthuses Scalia. And real liberty can never thrive so long as our super rich enjoy a stranglehold on our political process. But if the Supreme Court chooses to erase our remaining post-Watergate campaign finance reforms, Richard Nixon's scandalous reign may come to seem — thanks to growing inequality — mere kid's play.

Scalia's comment came as the court heard oral arguments in a case that could end up giving America's wealthy a perpetual green light to contribute as much as they want directly to politicians and political parties. And that's on top of the tsunami of unaccountable cash they already give to "independent" SuperPACs and similar outfits.

Credit Shaun McCutcheon, an electrical company CEO from Alabama, for starting the ball on this case rolling. In the 2012 election cycle, McCutcheon contributed heavily to conservative candidates and Republican Party committees. But the experience left the mega-millionaire feeling terribly aggrieved.

Federal campaign finance reform legislation enacted four decades ago in the wake of the Watergate scandal limits how much individuals can give directly to candidates and political parties. In 2012, McCutcheon ran up against those limits, then sitting at about \$46,000 for candidates and \$77,000 for party committees.

McCutcheon had wanted to give candidates and party panels much more than that. Under the law, he couldn't then — and he can't now either. The current, inflation-adjusted aggregate limit for the 2014 congressional elections: \$123,000.

But wealthy individuals like McCutcheon, thanks to the high court's 2010 *Citizens*

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didn't have nearly as much wealth available to spend as the nation's rich today. The campaigns, as much as they want to influence a federal election's impact.

In other words, a billionaire can't currently give a particular congressional candidate a \$1 million check. But the same billionaire can legally hand a TV station \$1 million to run 30-second ads that extol that candidate's virtues — or attack that candidate's opponent.

This sort of "independent expenditure" can make a major impact as campaigns play out. Independent expenditures can also complicate campaigns, especially when deep-pockets go "off-message" in the advertising they finance. In most situations, candidates and political parties would much rather have billionaires contribute directly to them and not go off and spend independently.

If the Supreme Court uses the McCutcheon case to erase our last remaining Watergate-era campaign funding limits, these political insiders will get their way. They could, for the first time in years, to solicit unlimited contributions from America's wealthy.

That turn of events, unions and public interest groups point out, would leave political candidates and party officials even more eager to grant wealthy donors "improper influence."

The prospect of such improper influence prompted the Communications Workers to lead a pro-small d-democracy anti-campaign cash protest in front of the High Court the day the justices heard the oral arguments.

Inside the courtroom, U.S. Solicitor General Donald Verrilli did his best to explain why the limits should remain. Without limits on direct contributions to candidates and parties, he argued, 500 exceedingly wealthy Americans would be able to bankroll the entire political "shooting match." We would have, Verrilli charged, government "run of, by, and for those 500 people."

Fred Wertheimer, America's elder statesman of campaign finance reform, has a warning of his own. Repealing limits on direct contributions to candidates and parties, he contends, would take us right back to the same political corruption that led to the Watergate scandals.

But Wertheimer may be understating the danger. Repealing limits on direct contributions to candidates and parties would likely create a political environment far more toxic than anything right before Watergate.

The reason? Back before Watergate, in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, America's rich  
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didn't have nearly as much wealth available to spend as the nation's rich today. The incomes of today's wealthy simply tower over the incomes of America's wealthy in the years right before Watergate.

Some numbers: In 1972, the year of the Watergate burglary, the nation's top 0.1% averaged, in today's dollars, the equivalent of \$1.48 million in income each. In 2012, America's top 0.1% averaged \$6.4 million, over four times as much.

But the gap between rich then and rich now becomes even greater when you take taxes into effect. In 1972, taxpayers averaging \$1.48 million in today's dollars paid 40.7% of their total incomes in federal income tax. In 2012, the non-partisan Tax Policy Center estimates, taxpayers in the top 0.1% paid federal income taxes at about half that rate.

The bottom line: America's really rich in 2012 had over six times more after-tax dollars in their pockets, after inflation, than their counterparts in 1972.

Watergate corruption? If the Supreme Court ends all limits on what our contemporary super-rich can throw into election campaigns, American politics faces dangers far more troubling than anything Richard Nixon ever created.

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PHOTO CAPTIONS

2013-186 – WORKERS AND THEIR ALLIES march in Duluth, Minn., for a higher state minimum wage. Photo by Larry Sillanpa of the *Duluth Labor World* via PAI Photo Service. **See Minn. minimum wage story.**

2013-187 – REPS. KEITH ELLISON AND RICHARD NOLAN, D-Minn., host a roundtable of low-wage workers who discussed what it's like to live on the minimum wage. Photo courtesy of *Workday Minnesota* via PAI Photo Service. **See Minn. minimum wage story.**

2013-188 – PROF. BENJAMIN GINSBERG of Johns Hopkins University discusses the need for university faculty activism with University of Minnesota-Duluth history professor Stephen Matthews. Photo by Larry Sillanpa of the *Duluth Labor World* via PAI Photo Service. **See university story.**

2013-189 – CAROL ROTHMAN, The Newspaper Guild's Secretary-Treasurer, shown here talking with a colleague, announced she will retire at the end of the year. Photo courtesy The Newspaper Guild-CWA via PAI Photo Service. **See Rothman story.**

2013-190 – RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President, shown here in a file photo, said the federal government shutdown/lockout showed "a minority of Right-Wing extremists took our nation hostage to push an ideological agenda" which "is not only unacceptable, it violates our values." Photo by Mark Gruenberg of TNG-CWA Local 32035 for PAI Photo Service. **See Washington Window.**