

the national lawyers guild

# NEWSLETTER of the **Labor & Employment Committee**

<http://www.nlg-laboremploy-comm.org>



October 2011

## Convention Schedule

**Wednesday, October 12**

**CALL/ALAL/NLG panel on solidarity work**  
5:30 PM to 7:00 PM U Penn Law School

**Thursday, October 13**

**L & E Committee Meeting**  
2:00 PM to 4:00 PM Independence A

**Int'l Labor Justice Working Group Meeting**  
4:15 PM to 5:30 PM Senate

**L & E Committee Reception**  
5:30 PM to 7:00 PM Constitution

**Friday, October 14**

**Foreign Workers/Temporary Visas**  
8:30 AM to 9:45 AM Liberty B

**American Legislative Exchange Council Exposed**  
8:30 AM to 9:45 AM Liberty B

**From Madison to Michigan**  
10:00 AM to 11:15 AM Senate

**International Committee Reception**  
5:30 PM to 7:00 PM Independence

**Saturday, October 15**

**Plenary: Human rights throughout the Americas: progressive lawyers join forces**  
1:00 PM to 3:00 PM Liberty Ballroom

**Philly Workers Rising Up**  
3:15 PM to 4:30 PM Senate

**Sunday, October 16**

**Workers Rights Are Human Rights**  
10:30 AM to 12:00 PM Liberty C

*This schedule is subject to change. Check in at our table for the latest information.*

## WE ARE ALL WISCONSIN: The Stakes Get Even Higher

BY DEAN HUBBARD

The coordinated attack on workers' rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining throughout the nation has expanded from the states to the federal government. After a spring of legislative attacks on workers in at least 41 states coordinated by the Koch Brothers-funded American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), this summer the House Republican branch of the right wing hate machine used the debt ceiling deadline to hold the U.S. economy hostage, extracting as ransom an agreement to slash \$2.5 trillion from essential programs (with much more to come from an unaccountable "Super Committee"). The same Tea Party-dominated House welcomed the fall by passing a bill that would allow employers to eliminate jobs in order to punish workers for exercising the human rights that are protected by both international and domestic law.

They are executing a plan.

It began with the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision, which allows unlimited corporate spending on politics. It allowed the extreme right and their billionaire buddies to spend historic sums to build the Tea Party and take over the U.S. House of Representatives and most of the state legislatures and Governor's mansions in the November 2010 mid-term elections.

With that victory, the enemies of an organized working class decided that the time was ripe to move in and finish us off once and for all.

Before breaking down the nature of the attack, let's examine its roots.

The last 35 years have seen the increased impoverishment of working Americans. The income of the middle class and the working poor has risen by only a tiny percentage of overall growth, while income for the richest 1 percent has skyrocketed. The gap between the rich and the rest of us has grown wider, and more and more Americans have been consigned to lives of debt and/or poverty. *(continued)*

## We Are All Wisconsin (continued)

This massive upward redistribution of wealth is the result of a combination of factors, including the anti-union offensive that began when President Reagan broke the PATCO strike in 1981, so-called “neoliberal” economic policies that led to massive outsourcing and offshoring of unionized manufacturing jobs, and undemocratic and anti-worker union organizing laws and policies, among other factors.

But while the reasons may be complex, there’s no real debate about the bottom line: the super-rich are increasing their share of the pie, and the rest of us are lucky if we get crumbs.

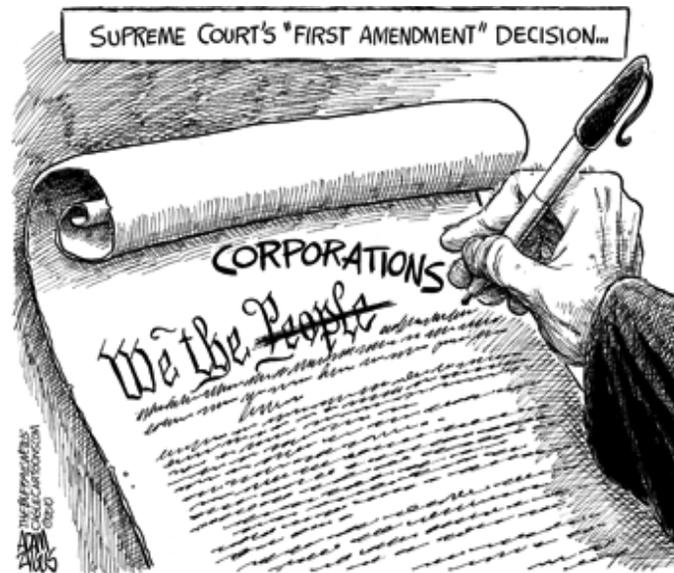
Unions used to have the density to create a significant political counterweight to the power of the wealthy. But union political power has declined with private sector union density, which is at a historic low, below 7 percent, while public sector density is still over 30 percent. That’s why the right is going after the public sector unions now. In many places they’re the last obstacle to a total takeover by the rich and their political hired guns.

Organized labor is in the trouble of its life. But it’s not just organized labor. There is a broad realization that the laws being passed by the legislatures in so many states and in Congress could silence and crush the whole society’s ability to speak out and have any stake in the economy. At its heart, this is a battle to the death about whether we will have democracy or oligarchy in the United States.

The Wisconsin stealth attack was just the first shot in what became a nationwide assault. Anti-worker legislation has been introduced in 41 states in the last year. The bills fall into several broad categories:

- Outright bans or restrictions on collective bargaining, as in Wisconsin and Ohio.
- Worker Gag bills and Paycheck Deception bills that ban or restrict union and worker political activity.
- Classic Right to Work (without a union) laws.
- Privatization of public services, including direct attacks on public transportation.
- Eliminating or restricting teacher tenure and due process rights.

- Back door attacks on democracy and freedom of association that strip authority from municipalities to negotiate agreements with their workers.
- And this doesn’t include the record number of voter suppression bills or the attacks on immigrant workers, unemployment benefits, and workers’ comp laws.



After the mid-terms, the new right wing majority in the House of Representatives tried to pass a budget that would privatize Medicare and gut Social Security and education. While they did not succeed in that attempt, when it came time to raise the nation’s debt ceiling in early August—a routine measure that passed 18 times during the Reagan Administration and seven times under George W. Bush- they used the statutory deadline to effectively hold the U.S. economy hostage.

They extracted, as ransom, an agreement to \$2.5 trillion in budget cuts, with much more to come.

Although cuts in Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid were temporarily postponed, Republicans refused to raise a penny more in revenue from taxes on corporate jets, closing loopholes for oil companies, or letting the Bush tax cuts for millionaires expire. And they deftly changed the national conversation from jobs to spending and deficits.

At the same time, the Tea Party forces gave another demonstration of how far they’re willing to go if their demands aren’t met. Right in the middle of the debt ceiling fight, House Transportation Chair John Mica and his Republican colleagues literally shut down the FAA. It’s no secret that the reason was to try to undo a democratic union elections rule issued earlier this year by the National Mediation Board, which simply says that if someone doesn’t vote in a union election, their vote doesn’t count. Before that new rule, someone who didn’t vote was counted as a vote against the union. There wouldn’t be a single legislator in office if that was the rule for political elections. Mica and the House Republicans effectively said, “Unless we go back to stacking the deck against unions, we won’t appropriate a penny for the FAA, even if it means taking revenue away from hundreds of construction companies and throwing thousands of people out of work.”

In short, billionaire-funded Tea Party Republicans were willing to risk global financial collapse, throw millions more people out of work, shut down our nation's aviation system, and damage the long-term credit rating of the United States to get massive spending cuts that will make things even worse. Our enemies are willing to risk financial Armageddon unless they get everything their most extreme elements want. With their victory on the debt ceiling, it appears that whichever party is most prepared to be most ruthless, to most threaten the nation's economic security, gets to dictate policy.

Indeed, it has become fashionable for politicians to blame workers for the economic crisis brought about by the excesses of Wall Street. Politicians all over the country, including Democrats, are trying to repeal or scale back collective bargaining rights, pensions and health care for ordinary Americans in order to balance budgets without raising taxes on the corporations and wealthy speculators who got us into this mess in the first place.

The point that politicians miss when they call for "shared sacrifice" is that the same people who caused the economic meltdown are now making record profits, while millions of people who had nothing to do with making the mess remain unemployed.

For anybody who was under any illusion about the scope of the assault, the August Verizon strike was very instructive. It showed that the legislative attacks on the public sector have spread to direct attacks on private sector unions by corporate employers. It confirmed that the big companies and the billionaires believe that they don't have to worry about politicians or public opinion; they believe that labor is weak, and they believe that the time to kill us off for good is now.

Verizon has made \$22.5 billion in profits in the last 4 1/2 years. They have paid \$258 million in compensation to their top 5 executives over the last 4 years. At the same time, they are demanding that their 45,000 active workers and thousands more retirees each accept thousands in new health care costs, the elimination of job security, and frozen pensions. They are essentially trying to kill the American Dream for these middle-class unionized workers. Verizon was negotiating like the Tea Party—they were refusing to budge from their original unreasonable demands.

This was not a situation in which a powerful union was making unreasonable demands of a struggling employer. They only asked for a fair negotiating process. This is the same fight that workers and communities are fighting throughout the country: a fight against billionaires and mega-corporations just for a chance to negotiate a fair slice of the pie.

Finally, on September 14, House Republicans escalated their attacks on the working class by passing (238–186) a bill that would cripple the National Labor Relations Board and allow employers to retaliate against workers who exercise their workplace rights. Under the bill, employers would even be able to legally eliminate workers' jobs. Republicans, Tea Party extremists and business groups have used a routine

complaint the NLRB issued against the Boeing Co. in April as cover for their hysterical and sweeping attacks on workers and the NLRB. In a videotaped interview with *The Seattle Times*, a senior Boeing executive said, "the overriding factor" in the company's decision to move the line wasn't "the business climate. And it wasn't the wages we're paying today." It was, he said, to avoid strikes. While the bill is not expected to be brought up for a Senate vote. It is important to note what Tea Party

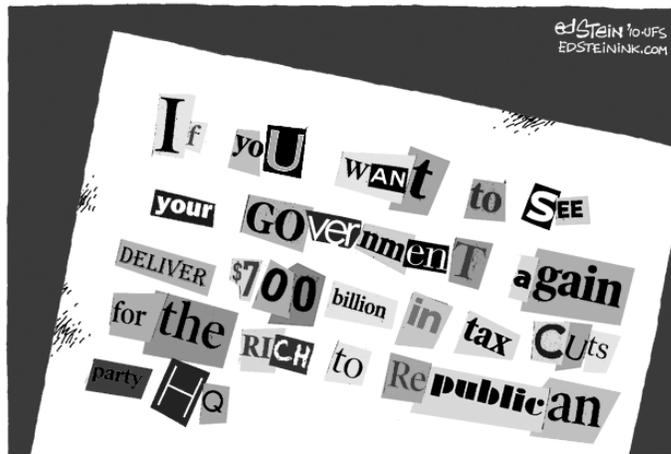
Republicans want to do and will do if they take control of the Senate. As a group of 250 professors said, the bill would mean that

Employers will be able to eliminate jobs or transfer employees or work for no purpose other than to punish employees for exercising their rights and the Board will be powerless to direct the employer to return the work regardless of the circumstances. And these employees will lose their jobs because they tried to exercise their federally protected rights.

*"Statement of Professors from Colleges and Universities Across the United States on HR 2587," available online at [http://www.aflcio.org/joinaunion/upload/hr2587\\_professors.pdf](http://www.aflcio.org/joinaunion/upload/hr2587_professors.pdf)*

Ironically, the more the politicians succeed in these attacks on ordinary working families, the weaker the economy will become. Since the Great Depression, even classical economists have agreed that, while cutting the budget deficit is a good long-term goal for the economy, in the midst of a serious unemployment crisis, the government has to prime the pump by investing in jobs, infrastructure, education, research and development.

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## **We Are All Wisconsin** (continued)

The key to recovery from a deep economic slump like the one we are in now is for governments to stimulate demand. The best way to stimulate demand is to give people productive work that puts money in their pockets. Reducing the ability of workers to spend will further reduce demand, as will eliminating the vital services they provide, further slowing the economy.

But the harsh reality is that in the current economic and political climate, politicians couldn't do the right thing even if they wanted to.

Rich people don't only have more wealth than ordinary people, they have more political power as well. The more inequality there is in our economy, the more our political system is skewed in favor of the rich.

This has actually been verified by a recent study, which shows that currently, the top 10 percent of income earners hold about 90 percent of materially based political power, and that "each member of the top 1 percent averaged more than 100 times the power of a member of the bottom 90 percent." Jeffrey A. Winters and Benjamin I. Page, *Oligarchy in the United States?* 7 Perspectives on Politics 731-51 (2009).

Without public campaign financing and with unlimited corporate spending, politicians, in order to get elected, must sell their souls to the highest bidder—the big corporations and the wealthy, including the people who control the corporate media.

As the rich get richer and more powerful, politicians increasingly align policies with their interests, which increases inequality still further. Meanwhile, the middle and working classes are left with shrinking incomes and correspondingly less power to demand investment in a fairer economy.

Workers, whether they are in Unions or not, students, community groups, thousands of ordinary Americans, stand shocked and appalled at the sweeping and bizarre nature of these attacks.

The labor movement is in an emergency mode. Expect it to remain so for the foreseeable future, possibly years ahead.

This fight is a matter survival not only for the organized working class, but for the 98% of people in the U.S. and the 99+ % around the world who are not rich. We are facing the biggest crisis of our lifetimes. Big business and the billionaires think that if they own the politicians they own the country, and that if they own the country, the rest of us exist only to serve them.



There were cops and firefighters who thought our enemies might get away with attacking teachers and transit workers, but they would never come after them. Well, guess what? Now they're going after them too. The uniformed services weren't exempt, and neither are the rest of us.

The labor movement needs to win in places like Wisconsin and Ohio to be able to fight back at all, in any industry. They must win these political fights to be able to win anything at the bargaining table and move their issues in the period ahead, whatever sector of the economy they work in. And if the labor movement loses, we all lose. We have a limited window that will determine what 2012 and beyond looks like.

The Tea Party continues to have momentum and control of conversation coming out of the Beltway. The progressive movement has momentum coming out of states like Wisconsin and Ohio. We're competing to set the climate for 2012 and beyond. Some of the major mileposts along the way include:

- Wisconsin recall elections: In August, progressive forces built on voter anger about Wisconsin Governor Walker's union-busting to recapture two seats in the Wisconsin State Senate. These victories represented incremental but real progress, not only for the people of Wisconsin, but for the nation. They showed that the tide may have begun to turn against Republican politicians everywhere who attack transit workers, teachers and nurses while protecting tax giveaways to millionaires and big corporations.
- Struggles like that between west coast longshore workers and an anti-union exporter, which exploded on September 7 when workers shut ports in Washington down completely. A terminal there was invaded and hoppers holding about 10,000 tons of grain were opened onto railroad tracks. ILWU President Bob McEllrath was detained by police as longshore workers massed on railroad tracks to stop a shipment of grain to a non-ILWU terminal. Police used clubs and pepper spray on protesters as they made 19 arrests. ILWU spokesman Craig Merrilees said, "When corporations and the government turn their backs on working families, it shouldn't surprise anyone to see people step forward and try to fight back."
- Occupation of Wall Street: On the 17th of September, a coalition of thousands of mostly young people flooded into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupied Wall Street. They said they plan to stay for months. The occupiers were emulating protesters in Egypt, Greece, Spain, and

Iceland, who have used the tactic of mass occupation to resist austerity programs that cut vital services and to restore democracy in their countries. Protesters said they would use nonviolence to achieve their ends and maximize the safety of all participants. Occupiers say they will formulate a single demand through a democratic consensus, and will not leave until that demand has been met. A Facebook poll started by the group Adbusters suggests the demand might be an end to the laws granting corporations the same rights as human beings.

- Ohio Referendum for “Citizens’ Veto of Union-busting Law.” This summer, Ohio residents submitted over 1.3 million signatures, five times the 231,000 they needed, on a petition for a referendum that would amount to a “citizens’ veto” of the anti-public sector collective bargaining law, Senate Bill 5, pushed through by right wing forces led by Governor Kasich. Winning this referendum in November will send a strong message to right wing politicians that attacking workers is a good way to guarantee losing power.
- Finally, as early as November and as late as January, Wisconsin residents will have the chance to recall the Tea Party standard-bearer and Koch Brothers puppet who started the assault: Governor Scott Walker. Knocking Walker out is a tall order, as progressive forces would have to gather some 600,000 signatures to get the recall on the ballot. But given what happened in Ohio this summer, it is a real possibility, and defeating Walker would be a “shot heard round the world” and a potential momentum-changer in the fight for democracy and human rights in the U.S.

In this war, and it is a war, it is more than a cliché to say that our enemies have the money power, but we have the people power. With their allies, organized workers vastly outnumber the billionaires and the politicians they own. With those numbers comes power, but we have to know how to mobilize, inspire and unleash our forces. History teaches that the drama and scale of the protests must match and exceed the intensity of the attacks. With protests against the attacks on workers and against government by and for the rich spreading beyond Wisconsin and Ohio to the rest of the country, we have the best chance in our lifetimes to be part of a broad social movement to restore American democracy.

The change we need can happen, but it won’t happen unless we make it happen. It is up to each of us do a little bit every day to build the powerful movement that will translate the Guild’s mission to elevate human rights over property interests into a reality in peoples’ daily lives.



## **WALKOUT AT HERSHEY:**

### **Extracts from the Report of the August 2011 Human Rights Delegation to Hershey, Pennsylvania**

Between May and June 2011, approximately 400 foreign students from countries such as China, Turkey, Ukraine, Moldova, Mongolia, Romania, Ghana, Thailand, and others, arrived in Pennsylvania through the United States’ Summer Student Travel/Work Program. The students all contracted through agencies in their home countries with the Council for Educational Travel, USA (CETUSA) to work for The Hershey Company packing chocolates at Hershey’s Eastern Distribution Center, III, in Palmyra, PA. The students came eager to participate in the educational and cultural exchange promised. The program that brought them to the United States is often referred to as the J-1 program, named for the visa issued by the U.S. Department of State that allows students to travel to the United States and to obtain short-term employment that will both expose them to the daily life of individuals living in the United States, and allow them to earn income to travel and see the country.

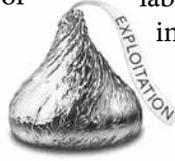
According to these J-1 students, the living and working conditions that they faced in Hershey fell far short of the program’s promise. The students described being employed in a packing factory, working at punishing speeds under abusive supervision in physically grueling work, that—after deductions were taken for housing and other employment-related costs—netted them a first week’s salary as low as \$20 for the week. Students described the distress they experienced as the weeks went by and they realized their income would clearly be inadequate to cover the costs of the program much less fund the travel and cultural exchange activity that had drawn most of them to the program in the first place. Further, the students told of finding themselves encased in a confusing web of contractual relationships set up among a group of corporations whose interwoven roles were difficult to unravel and where accountability seemed elusive at best. As students explained it, they worked packing products made by one company, inside a warehouse run by another, while technically employed by yet another company that withheld their rent money and funneled it to their “cultural exchange sponsoring agency,” which in turn paid it over to private landlords.

Students related that they made individual attempts to voice concerns about their working and living conditions, to win changes in practices and policies, or simply to find an individual way out of the trap into which they had fallen. Virtually to a person, the students reported that these individual efforts had been in vain. Students reported that when they ultimately began voicing their grievances

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## Walkout At Hershey *(continued)*

collectively, rather than achieving positive change, they were told that their conduct would get them into trouble and were advised to cease their efforts or face serious consequences for themselves, their families, and their futures. In an extraordinary leap of faith and display of courage, many students at the Hershey's warehouse responded by joining together in solidarity, making contact with people in the larger community who could provide information and support, and then taking their story to the American public.



On August 17, 2011, approximately 200 of the J-1 students employed at the Hershey Company's Eastern Distribution Center III staged a sit-in in protest of their working and living conditions, conditions that differed dramatically from what they had been led to expect from communications with individuals with prior J-1 experiences, their own prior experiences, and the promises and assurances of their home agencies and CETUSA at the point of recruit. The following day, on August 18, 2011, the students marched in protest in Hershey, PA. This action by the student workers quickly garnered significant media attention and support from the labor movement, local residents, and others across the country...

The students' complaints mirror a national narrative in which employers are increasingly relying on layers of contracting and subcontracting in an effort to shield themselves from their moral and legal obligations to their workforce, resulting in a rapid decline in terms and conditions of work for the average worker...

...Surrounded by physical hazards, students are required to work at a dangerously rapid pace and engage in repetitive heavy lifting.... Students described working conditions so dangerous that they feared for their lives....

The Delegation heard evidence that suggests management engaged in a widespread coercive campaign to undermine the students' freedom of association and right to engage in concerted activities protected by international and US law....

Another disturbing element in reports received by the Delegation was testimony that the level of local law enforcement response was disproportionate to the action, and significantly greater than local community members had seen in labor disputes in the recent past, raising questions as whether the police presence was increased with the purpose of intimidating the students and undermining their freedom of association and right to engage in concerted activities related to their employment....

[R]eports received by the Delegation indicate that students were subjected to active and escalating intimidation when they showed signs of organizing to protest their treatment.

In these circumstances it is urgent that investigators take adequate preventive measures to guard against reprisal and against intimidation of workers through threats of reprisal....

In summary, the workers' allegations implicate a number of potential legal violations, including discrimination, forced labor, substandard conditions of work, wage theft, and infringement on associational rights....

*The entire report and its recommendations can be found at <http://www.guestworkeralliance.org/2011/09/justice-at-hersheys-human-rights-report-92011/>.*

## Solidarity Forever

For the last several years the Guild has been developing ties with a number of progressive lawyers associations in the Western Hemisphere, including the Canadian Association of Labor Lawyers (CALL) and the Association of Labor Lawyers of Latin America (ALAL). We have co-sponsored a summer internship in Oaxaca, have submitted an amicus brief to the Mexican Supreme Court, have assisted each other with cases filed pursuant to the NAALC, and most recently, have participated—as judges and petitioners—in the International Tribunal on Trade Union Freedom of Association's investigation of abuses of the human rights of workers and independent unions by the Mexican government. This work is acutely important given the increasing integration of the global economy.

This year, the International Labor Justice Working Group will be leading a plenary discussion on Saturday, October 15th, at 1:00 PM on ***Human Rights Across the Continent, Workers Under Attack and Fighting Back***, with speakers from ALAL and CALL, including Luis Enrique "Lucho" Ramírez from Argentina. Ramírez has been working with labor lawyers throughout Latin America to develop a "Carta Sociolaboral Latinoamericana (Latin American Social/Labor Charter)," a radical and influential proposal to revamp the hemisphere's economic and labor relations regimes to give workers power over markets and ensure a more just social order. This charter arises from and is tied to the movements that have been so successful in shifting power relations in the Americas in recent years.

In addition Robin Alexander of the United Electrical Workers (UE) and Mark Rowlinson from the Canadian National Office of the United Steelworkers (USW) and CALL will discuss their work on NAFTA issues and in support of Mexican workers, while Mark Burton will report on the Guild's work with lawyers and workers in Colombia and our fight against the Colombia Free Trade Agreement. Join us for what will be an important discussion of issues that could not be more timely.

# Defending Democracy

BY TOVA PERLMUTTER

*The right of voting for representatives is the primary right by which other rights are protected. To take away this right is to reduce a man to slavery, for slavery consists in being subject to the will of another, and he that has not a vote in the election of representatives is in this case.*

*Thomas Paine First Principles of Government*

On June 22, the Sugar Law Center filed a major lawsuit to defend democracy in the state of Michigan. The Republican-dominated state legislature passed a law in March that establishes a new form of local government unknown anywhere in the United States: government by decree, in which citizens are ruled by an unelected official.

Sugar Law is challenging the constitutionality of “Local Government and School District Fiscal Accountability Act” (Michigan PA-4), which grants complete discretion to the state’s executive branch to appoint an “Emergency Manager” for any local unit of government. Emergency Managers (EMs) are authorized to sell off public property and shred all municipal contracts, including union contracts. They can dismiss elected officials, charge the local budget for hefty salaries they pay themselves and anyone they choose to hire, and even dissolve the local government entirely.

This is no idle threat. Emergency Managers have already voided union contracts, removed elected officials from office and run up huge bills for the Michigan cities of Benton Harbor and Pontiac, as well as the Detroit Public Schools. (Benton Harbor, Pontiac and Detroit are all predominantly African-American cities.) As could be predicted, there is no visible improvement in the financial situation of any of them—but there is a fundamental loss of citizens’ right to govern themselves.

Our legal challenge is led by Sugar Law Center’s Legal Director, longtime Michigan Guild leader John Philo. Eminent co-counsel includes the Detroit/Michigan NLG chapter (via Guild stalwarts Bill Goodman and Julie Hurwitz) and the Center for Constitutional Rights, as well as attorneys who work with the state’s public employee unions.

The complaint we filed June 22 brings several arguments:

- The emergency manager law suspends home rule, by giving managers power to repeal local laws, ordinances, charters and contracts.
- It effectively eliminates citizens’ rights to vote for and petition local government on matters of local concern.

- PA-4 violates the separation of powers, by allowing the executive branch and its agencies to exercise legislative duties.
- The law allows the state legislature to enact unfunded mandates—specifically prohibited by a citizen-passed amendment to the Michigan constitution—by using local taxpayer dollars for such purposes as managers’ salaries and staff.

Sugar Law’s approach is not just in the courts. From the outset, we have designed this effort to engage the community and to complement campaigns against the law mounted by unions and other community groups.

Plaintiffs in the suit are 28 citizens from across Michigan. They include young professionals and retirees; African-Americans, whites and Latinos; parents and people without children. Some live in cities that are suffering great financial distress, others in communities where the fiscal challenges are currently less dramatic.

All are well-connected to the communities from which they come. They have gone through extensive briefing and media training to assist them in taking the case to the wider public. Several of them spoke and answered questions at news conferences held throughout the state to announce the filing of the suit, and they are continuing to provide statements and information for press and community meetings.

We’ve also mounted a broad online campaign to educate the public about the law and the need to fight it. We’ve created a website devoted to the suit—[www.democracyemergency.org](http://www.democracyemergency.org)—and will be using Facebook, Twitter and every other tool we can to get the word out.

There is indeed an emergency in Michigan—an emergency for democracy. The emergency began with the passage of Michigan PA-4 and it worsens each time the law is implemented and each time it is invoked to distort and diminish decision making of, by and for the people.

This particular method of destroying local government to aid corporate interests is starting in Michigan, but will spread elsewhere if we can’t stop it here. It is part of a national pattern that reflects the agenda of the Koch brothers, right-wing think tanks such as the American Legislative Exchange Council, and powerful corporate lobbies to throttle democracy, undermine unions and concentrate still more power in the hands of wealthy, private actors.

At Sugar Law we believe this case offers an important opportunity to fight back, for the people of Michigan and the nation. Please contact us [[www.sugarlaw.org](http://www.sugarlaw.org)] if you can provide support or have questions about our suit.

# Learning By Teaching—The Guild's Mentoring Program

BY FRAN SCHREIBERG

Our committee members know as well as anyone—and probably better than most—that none of us got where we are by our own efforts alone. On the contrary, we all depend on our coworkers, others in the movement and those who have preceded us to learn how to be effective advocates for working people.

This is particularly true, of course, for recent law school graduates, law students, and new legal workers—and even more so in these tough economic times. Which is why the Labor & Employment Committee has launched a mentorship program, similar to what some Chapters already have, that aims to help these new members succeed by establishing lasting professional relationships with experienced lawyers and legal workers.

This program benefits the rest of us as well, of course, by supporting the coming generation of Guild members, building the community of legal activists who advance workers' rights, and building the Guild. While the formal mentor/mentee relationship is for one year, the benefits for both mentors and mentees will last much longer.

There is no substitute for the sort of wisdom that our members have gained through practical experience. Our program also focuses on practical issues: providing course selection advice for students, critiquing resumes and conducting mock employment interviews, helping to network for clerkships or employment positions, and providing general career advice.

The program began as a pilot project during the Spring semester of the 2010-2011 school year. We are now accepting applications for the 2011-2012 school year.

To volunteer as a mentor or apply as a mentee, please go to [http://www.nlg-laboremploy-comm.org/Mentorship\\_Program.php](http://www.nlg-laboremploy-comm.org/Mentorship_Program.php), read the section that applies to you, and then complete and submit the appropriate application form. You can submit forms digitally or you can use a PDF form by downloading it, filling it out, printing it and submitting it by mail to Cathy Hight at the Portland Law Collective, 1130 SW Morrison Suite 407, Portland, OR 97205 or [cathy@portlandlawcollective.com](mailto:cathy@portlandlawcollective.com). You can also call Hight with questions at 503-228-1889 x 5.



## Labor & Employment Committee

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