



Democratic Socialists of America

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2015 Douglass-Debs Dinner—Another Success

By David Green



President Pat Devlin, and Planned Parenthood of Michigan. Our dinner co-chairs were Coalition of Labor Union Women President Connie Leak, Michigan State AFL-CIO President Karla Swift, and Metropolitan Detroit AFL-CIO President Rick Blocker. Our keynote speaker was progressive columnist/radio commentator/agitator Jim Hightower.

The program began with the Bill Meyer Group leading the audience in singing “Solidarity Forever” and “The Internationale.” UAW Local 600 Vice-President A.J. Freer then welcomed the crowd to the dinner. Detroit DSA Chair David Green gave a brief review of the organization’s work over the past year. Jim Hightower had the crowd laughing frequently during his remarks. He also urged people to “agitate” against “Citizens United”, reauthorization of the



Over 155 people purchased tickets and braved torrential rains to attend the fifteenth annual Frederick Douglass-Eugene V. Debs Dinner at UAW Local 600 in Dearborn on Saturday, May 30th. The honorees were UAW Vice-President Cindy Estrada, Michigan Building Trades Council

Patriot Act, and Right-to-Work legislation. He strongly endorsed the Presidential campaign of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders. DSA reinforced this appeal by including literature on Bernie’s policy positions with the dinner ad books.

In her acceptance speech, Cindy Estrada confirmed her commitment to social justice and social unionism. She publicly identified herself as a socialist. Pat Devlin gave a strong defense of Michigan’s Prevailing Wage Act in his acceptance speech. This law is presently under attack by the Republican majority in the Michigan legislature.

Dani Vilella, a field organizer for Planned Parenthood of Michigan, accepted the Douglass-Debs Award on behalf of her organization. In her acceptance speech, she referenced Planned Parenthood’s work on behalf



of reproductive choice, providing health care such as Papsmeas and mammograms to poor women, and signing up previously uninsured Michiganders for the Affordable Care Act.

Democratic Socialists of America Greater Detroit

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“Fight for Fifteen”

by Catherine Hoffman, Vice-Chair, Detroit DSA

On April 15th, a large contingent of Detroit DSAers joined together with fast food workers, students, labor activists, and other community activists to march in support of a \$15 dollar an hour minimum wage and the right of all workers to unionize. We gathered for a rally on the campus of Wayne State University and then marched to a nearby McDonald's. We surrounded the McDonald's and completely blocked the drive through. Media reports greatly under-estimated the crowds, but we estimate that over 2,000 joined the march. A vast majority of those who participated were young people.

Fast food protesters began engaging in one day strikes starting in 2013. These strikes began in just a handful of cities, but quickly spread around the country. The April 15th protests were the biggest yet. There were strikes and/or rallies in over 230 U.S. cities, plus in additional cities around the world. As democratic socialists, we are proud to be a part of this movement. We believe that all workers deserve a living wage and all workers have the right to join a union. Already, some cities have raised their minimum wages. Most notably, the city of Seattle recently increased its minimum wage to \$15 an hour. This movement will likely continue to grow as more and more people realize that it is impossible to live on such low wages.

Join Us at our Next Meeting

Saturday, July 11, 2015

Royal Oak Senior/Community Center

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT - A FAILURE?????

by Marjorie Mitchell, Executive Director of the Michigan Universal Health Care Access Network

Listening to the “talking heads” on TV and many Republican members of Congress, one would be led to believe that the Affordable Care Act was, indeed a failure and a piece of legislation that deserved 60 efforts to repeal it over the last several years.

I submit that the persons making these allegations have not looked at the definition of failure:

“The fact or condition of not achieving the desired end or ends.”

The primary purpose of the Affordable Care Act was to increase access to AFFORDABLE health insurance coverage with essential benefits required for each policy offered. A strong emphasis was put on disease prevention services. The core belief of the Act, based on research, was that intervening early in a disease cycle or preventing the disease will dramatically lower, over time, the suffocating high costs of health care in America. In addition the act provided dollars for states to test new, innovative ways to address cost and quality, working to change a healthcare system that managed to volume to one that manages to positive health outcomes.

I strongly contend that the Act has been extremely successful in expanding affordable, quality health insurance coverage to Americans, especially in those states that chose to expand Medicaid, as Michigan did. In 2009, nearly 10% of Michigan’s population, or 1 million citizens, were uninsured. The data in 2015 is:

Nearly 300,000 people have health insurance through the federal exchange; Over 590,000 people have new insurance through Healthy Michigan (expanded Medicaid) with 90% of them completing a health assessment and choosing health goals to work on (many choosing more

than one); Michigan has received numerous federal grants to test new, innovative approaches to healthcare delivery and to build more clinics in underserved areas. The results are not yet known, but combined with the results of other states, we should be ready to institute new, proven approaches across America when the data is combined and analyzed; The costs for the Medicare program have leveled off and declining somewhat; Insurance premium costs appear to be leveling off and, in some cases, declining.

These outcomes are NOT failures. We should all be celebrating the outcomes and the suffering that is being eliminated for millions of our fellow citizens who could not afford to go to a doctor or pay a hospital bill.

Those of us who worked hard to pass the Act must concede, however, that the initial roll out of the Act was very rocky and that the Act was never a perfect piece of legislation. We are a democracy and no one ever gets everything they may want.

There is still much to do to achieve affordable, quality healthcare for all. Insurance coverage for everyone is still a future goal. True affordability to consumers remains an elusive dream. Bending the cost curve to mirror other industrialized countries has only just begun. The work to achieve quality services throughout the delivery system is just beginning.

It is for all of us to take responsibility for monitoring the further implementation of the Act and its outcomes. If it does not move us toward the goals of universality, affordability and quality, we may again need to look at models of single payer healthcare that other countries have embraced.

Prevailing Wage- Good for workers, good for the middle class

By Mike Jackson,

Executive Secretary Treasurer of the Michigan Regional Council of Carpenters and Millwrights.

After a steady drumbeat of attacks on unions and their members, it shouldn’t be surprising that the number one priority of House and Senate Republicans is to further undercut Michigan’s middle class. House and Senate Republicans’ first bill of the 2015 legislative session is to repeal Michigan’s Prevailing Wage law. The Prevailing Wage law is a base wage for State of Michigan funded construction work. The law gives all Michigan contractors a fair chance to bid and perform construction work. The repeal, if successful, would lower the wages

of Michigan’s skilled construction workers during the height of a construction boom when there is a skilled worker shortage in Michigan.

Study after study shows that repealing the prevailing wage will not save taxpayer money. In fact, without a prevailing wage, the door is opened to unscrupulous, out-of-state contractors that often pay out-of-state, unskilled workers low wages under the table, to undercut Michigan companies and Michigan workers. Michigan’s unionized building trades are highly trained, highly skilled, and

drug tested through self-funded training centers. But more importantly, they are your neighbors. They shop at your stores, they eat at your restaurants, and they own houses on your street. If their wages fall, all of Michigan will take an economic hit.

The prevailing wage has been a law in Michigan for over 50 years. It has served Michigan's contractors, construction workers, and the public. This vindictive

legislative action comes at a time when we need to encourage development, and encourage workers to join the skilled trades. Michigan Republican leadership's disdain for unions and their members evidently knows no bounds. They will not stop until every Michigan worker lives in poverty. But rest assured, Michigan's labor movement and its hardworking men and women will not give up the fight for good jobs with middle class wages.

Farmington Hills Passes Human Rights Ordinance

Gillian Talwar, Detroit DSA Executive Board Member

On April 13, the city of Farmington Hills became the 38th Michigan municipality to pass a Human Rights Ordinance, joining Royal Oak, Ferndale, Southfield, Detroit, Ann Arbor and many others. The ordinance prohibits discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations. DSA strongly supports these ordinances because of the gap in the state civil rights law which provides no remedy for discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Attempts to amend the state law last year failed when the Republicans refused to include protections for transgender people and the proponents for change stood firm against attempts to divide them. Passing local ordinances provides a measure of protection and also sends a message both to Lansing and to anyone hanging on to their bigotry that there is no tolerance in our communities for discrimination and hatred, and there is no turning back the tide of history.

Let's Ban Fracking!

Gillian Talwar, Detroit DSA Executive Board Member

The campaign to ban fracking in Michigan is gearing up for another attempt to get enough signatures to get a ban on fracking on the ballot in 2016. The Board of State Canvassers have approved the petition and signature collection will begin May 22. The organizers are hoping that the public is becoming better informed about the devastation fracking causes to the environment and to health, creating toxic waste, contaminating water, worsening global warming, and causing earthquakes. However, many more volunteers and more donations are needed to get the ballot initiative on the ballot. If you are able to volunteer to publicize the initiative, to help collect signatures, or are able to make a contribution, contact the Committee to Ban Fracking in Michigan at info@letsbanfracking.org or sign up on the website www.letsbanfracking.org

Calendar of Events

JUNE

Tuesday, June 9th--Socialist Reading Circle from 7:00-8:30 PM at the Ferndale Public Library, 222 E. Nine Mile Road.

Sunday, June 14th--Detroit DSA Executive Board Meeting from 10 AM until noon at the home of David and Teena Green, 28292 Harwich Drive, Farmington Hills.

Friday, June 19th--Michigan Universal Health Care Access Network's 10th Annual Health Heroes Dinner from 6-8 PM at Tabernacle Missionary Baptists Church, 2080 W. Grand Boulevard, Detroit

JULY

Saturday, July 11th--Detroit DSA General Membership Meeting from 10 AM until noon at the Royal Oak Senior/Community Center, 3500 Marais Avenue (near the intersection of Thirteen Mile and Crooks Roads)