



The Badger Bulletin

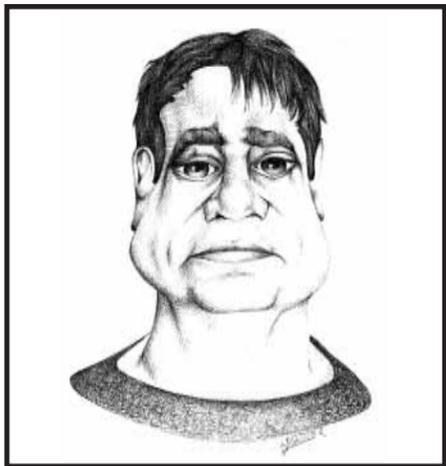
The American Postal Workers Union of Wisconsin

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2007 PPA Award Winner

November-December, 2008

THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT . . . BY STEVE LORD



— We Did It! —

WHAT NOW?

So what happens now? This election could be the most important thing to happen to working Americans in decades. We can pass the Employee Free Choice Act and give the right to join a union to any American who wants to. We can get affordable health care for all Americans. We can get people appointed to the Supreme Court, the Labor Department, and the USPS Board of Governors who will listen to the voice of labor not just corporate America. We can break our dependency on foreign oil and keep and create new jobs here in America. Have

you noticed that I have been saying that we can do these things? The reason I say we is because it is up to us to make sure these things get done. This election was not the end but a new beginning. The same grass roots efforts that won this election will be needed to make sure all of our efforts were not in vein. We will need to stay in contact with our representatives to make sure this country keeps heading in the right direction. In the coming weeks, month, and years this will be our mission. Together let's become activists for the rights of working Americans and their families.

HUMAN RELATIONS DIRECTOR

I have appointed Renee Heaney from the Wausau Area Local to fill the vacancy of the Human Relation Director. I have asked Renee to take on the task of updating our mailing list of locals and their officers from the APWU of Wisconsin. Renee will also be trying to compile an email list from these officers and locals. This will be the beginning of our efforts that I wrote about in forming an activist's network throughout the state. I am asking that all of you please cooperate with Renee in her efforts. I thank Renee for taking on this task as well as taking on the position of Human Relations Director. I'll talk to you soon and thanks for listening.

Hurrah! I can't tell you what a pleasure it is for me to write this article. On November 4th we elected Barack Obama to be our next President. Barack Obama's historic election as our first African American President gives us hope that America is heading in a direction that someday our children or grandchildren will not know the racial division that has plagued this country for its entire history. Hopefully we have turned a corner with this historic election.

Congratulations are due to the paid staff and volunteers from the APWU of Wisconsin who worked so hard to deliver Wisconsin for Barack Obama and our Democrat Congressional Representatives. A big thank you goes out to all of you whose help led to 18,000 contacts with APWU of Wisconsin members. These contacts were made through phone calls, plant gate leafleting, newsletters, and direct mailings. Every single member of the APWU of Wisconsin whose phone number was available to us was called. In addition, I would like to thank the APWU of Wisconsin Executive Board for allocating the funds to help finance this successful election campaign.

Your dues paid to the National APWU allowed APWU members in Wisconsin and across this country to take LWOP and be paid by the APWU to work solely on the AFL-CIO's Labor 2008. I was one of those paid staff members and I would like to personally thank you for the opportunity. I appreciate the letters, emails, and phone calls I received thanking me for my efforts but, the thanks goes out to all of you. Thanks also go out to the dues paying members of the APWU of Wisconsin for wisely voting to join the Wisconsin AFL-CIO. Because of this I was able to join members from 20 other AFL-CIO affiliates working on Labor 2008. Together we knocked on doors, leafleted plant gates, made phone calls, and spoke to union groups. An unprecedented number of Americans were on the ground from Labor 2008 and the Obama campaign. It was truly a grass roots effort that made the difference during this election cycle. We can be proud that the APWU and Labor 2008 had such a big role in these elections.

APWU Of Wisconsin Goes 100%

(Milwaukee, WI) APWU of Wisconsin, President Steve Lord, President Paul McKenna of Milwaukee Area Local 3 and *Badger Bulletin* Editor, John E. Durben visited the **Wisconsin State AFL-CIO** on July 17th. The purpose of the trip was to present the APWU of Wisconsin's first dues payment as a 100% organization to the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO. The check was presented at a Wisconsin State AFL-CIO Board of Directors meeting to President David Newby at their office in Milwaukee.

Delegates at the Wisconsin State Convention last May passed a resolution to have all APWU Locals in Wisconsin join the State affiliate of the AFL-CIO. Delegates at the Convention had the foresight to see that all Labor must become united to support each other's interests . . . especially in today's political arena.

The Wisconsin State AFL-CIO is a federation of over 1000 local unions which collectively represent about 250,000 workers rights in Wisconsin. The organization has become a national leader in such areas as political action, innovative workforce training and economic development, legislative initiatives on behalf of working families, and representation of the interests of all working people.



APWU of Wisconsin President Steve Lord (L) presents Wisconsin State AFL-CIO President with first 100% dues check.

Photo by: John E. Durben

The Christmas Periods For Postal Facilities Are As Follows:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Bargaining Unit Employees (except RSC N) excluded from POT (Hours Code 43)
Beginning – December 6, 2008, PP 26-2008, Week 1, Day 1
Ending – January 2, 2009, PP 01-2009, Week 2, Day 14 | 2. FLSA Exempt employees at other facilities eligible for additional pay
Beginning – December 6, 2008, PP 26-2008, Week 1, Day 1
Ending – December 24, 2008, PP 01-2009, Week 1, Day 5 |
|--|--|

EDUCATION AND ORGANIZATION . . . BY RICK GALLO, DIRECTOR

Condition Of The U. S. Postal Service



As postal employees, we have heard many a nay-sayer trumpet the dismal financial condition of the Postal Service. Mail volume has declined 12 percent and the deficit for Fiscal Year 2008 exceeded \$2.3 billion. The struggling economy is expected to further depress mail volume in 2009, and we have been told to anticipate an additional \$2 billion or more in expenses over revenue next year. In the best case scenarios, USPS can expect to experience deficits of \$5 billion as we enter Fiscal Year 2010. Indeed, there should be no doubt that the situation is probably the most serious it has ever been in the entire history of the USPS and its predecessor, the United States Post Office Department. The Postal Service is literally hemorrhaging red ink!

APWU President William Burrus recently sent an open letter the Postmaster General Potter. In that letter Burrus pointed out several areas of contention upon which USPS should focus. Included therein, Burrus said of the USPS business plan, "...must begin with the recognition that the current USPS business plan is not working and cannot be expected to work in the future. There must be an acknowledgment that subcontracting, outsourcing, work-hour reductions, work-share discounts, and an unhealthy level of

cooperation with major mailers and their agents have been ineffective." Burrus called upon the USPS to address these issues in order to save the USPS.

Typically management seeks to reduce work hours as a means of "saving money." As Burrus pointed out in his letter, "Work hours have been reduced by 36 million and yet the institution is still suffering a deficit of at least \$2.4 billion, so it should be obvious that work-hour reduction does not lead to solvency. And those who cite labor costs as the driving force behind the deficit should be reminded that postal rates are increasing at the rate of inflation, while wages lag behind." Yet, postal management continues on the same path of work hour reduction. In Wisconsin, we have heard that postmasters in all level 15 office and below have been instructed to cut clerk hours. Cutting clerk hours like this is easily accomplished, but that does not get the Work done. The mail still needs to get sorted, and the windows still need to be open, so how can the Postal Service cut those clerk hours and still get the work done? The only option available is for the postmasters and/or supervisors to absorb the clerk work. Folks, this is simply unconscionable; but it is actually happening.

If this is happening in your office, please contact a steward immediately so that we can get a grievance filed on your behalf.

At the national level, APWU has requested data from the Postal Service concerning all level 15, 16, 17, and 18 post offices to help determine whether or not USPS is improperly shifting work from craft employees to supervisory employees in violation of the National Agreement. Rulings by Arbitrators Sylvester Garrett and Shyam Das have determined that historical practice sets the baseline for the amount of work that can be performed by postmasters and supervisors in small offices. Any change not in keeping with that "history" in each individual office is viewed as a contract violation. We need to hear from you if this is happening in your office.

On another topic, I must express my personal delight in the fact that Barack Obama was elected as the 44th President of the United States. I helped at the Obama office in my local community, as did many other APWU members. Our own state president Steve Lord logged countless hours (and many miles) assisting on the campaign. Our heartfelt thanks are in order for all those who helped with, and supported this effort. Lets all move forward together!



Badger Bulletin

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The APWU of Wisconsin publishes this newsletter as a means of communicating with our members. The union encourages letters to the editor; letters must be signed but name will be withheld upon request. All opinions expressed are those of the writer, and not necessarily those of the state organization or its officers.

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Articles not credited are those of the editor.



LEGISLATIVELY SPEAKING . . . BY JEFF WORDEN, LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

Change Has Finally Arrived

November 4, 2008 is now etched in history. This was a long and hard battle but, when the dust cleared it was Barack Obama 55,015,187 and John McCain 50,337,843.

Not only did America elect a democrat for president but, the first African American as President. America spoke even louder by putting democrats in firm control of the Senate.

Currently the democrats had a slight lead in the senate 51-49. The democrats were hoping for a 60 seat majority in the senate-better known as "Filibuster proof" senate majority. As of the time of this article, the senate will now have 54 democrats, 40 republicans, 2 independents and 4 undetermined.

Wisconsin was definitely a STRONG BLUE state. Barack Obama won 56% of the state wide vote, giving Barack the highest percentage for a democrat since Lyndon Johnson in 1964. The democrats were able to flip 32 counties that were won by President Bush in 2004.

Obama favored well in the battle ground states of Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Indiana.

What made the victory even sweeter was when the Obama campaign focused on the Republican (or red) states, such as; Ohio, Florida, Colorado, Iowa, New Mexico and of course Virginia and then... won them all!

Many people state that their reasoning for voting for Obama was the Economy and the war in Iraq. The country was fed up with the continuous rhetoric from the current administration. As more and more Americans lose their jobs as well as their retirement monies and watch their investments dry up before them, then add in the fact of a GOP

Presidency with the WORST sustained approval ratings in the history of polling... well as you can see America was more than ready for change.

But, now is the time for the working class to regain what has been lost over the past eight years!

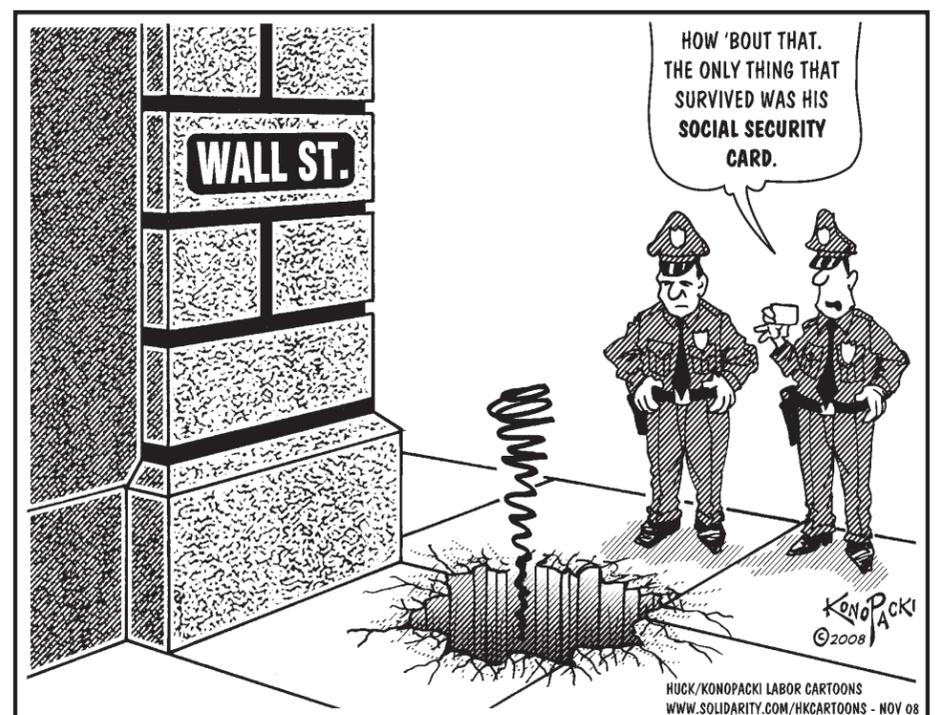
One of the first things that the labor movement will push for is the "Employee free choice act". At present the AFL-CIO is attempting to get over ONE MILLION signatures, therefore they will be ready with this legislation as soon as Barack Obama is sworn in! This legislation would make it easier for

employees to form a union without fear of reprisal and/or intimidation.

Copies of this petition are available from your local union or the AFL-CIO. If you have trouble obtaining these copies please contact APWU Wisconsin State President Steve Lord or me.

What must happen now is that we ALL must work together, yes that's right, even if you didn't vote for Barack Obama. The election is now over and we MUST show our true union solidarity and form as one! We can do it and we will!

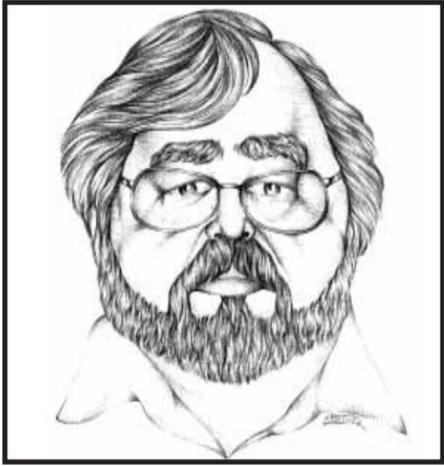
Take Care.



HUCK/KONOPACKI LABOR CARTOONS
WWW.SOLIDARITY.COM/HKARTOONS - NOV 08

BADGER BULLETIN BOARD

Change The Future



by John E. Durben,
Editor

Inauguration Day, January 20, 2009 will mark yet another historic day in American history with the swearing in of the first African American President (Barack Obama) ever to serve this great Country. As Americans we have seen this great Country more or less in a downward spiral for the last 8 years. The Bush administration embraced corporate America's agenda and carried it out to best of his ability to the detriment of main street America. As Americans we exercised our rights at the ballot box and took control on November 4th to "*change the future*". We elected a man that was endorsed by not only our own National Union but the AFL-CIO as well. Decedents of ours will read about what we have done favorably in future history books in years to come for our actions.

I am proud to be part of it and I'd like to thank our Union for allowing me to be in the "**Labor 2008**" work release program for about six weeks prior to the election. The office I worked in was headquartered on Green Bay's east side. The building was provided by the **American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)**. They also provided us with cell phones for making all those countless phone calls.

The staff included full time union staffers from the AFL-CIO in Washington, D.C., also, APWU (Steve Lord and I), NALC, UAW, IAM AFT, IBEW and OPEIU. The United Steel Workers (USW) did a superb job and were there when anything had to be done including providing us the use of their office in Menasha for an APWU phone bank one night to planning a caravan event for Congressman Kagen and other local candidates. It was a pleasure working with all these Union brothers and sisters who were all in it for one common goal and I feel I made some lifetime friendships.

WHAT I LEARNED

From what I saw through making one on one phone calls with members from throughout the State is that the majority of the membership supported the APWU endorsed candidate. But I can't imagine why more members were not supportive even knowing that their jobs, their "lifeline" was literally at stake during this election.

What I learned is that APWU cannot educate or dictate who the membership should vote for. All we can do is provide the information, the facts, and each member must take it upon themselves to read it and educate themselves. I've talked about "hot button issues" and "smoke and mirrors" in

previous articles through the years and some people out there are still falling for them. Three of the main items against Obama that I recall that came up when making calls were:

Race: I don't know how that can be an issue in today's world and I'm not even going to attempt to address it.

Guns: The NRA did an excellent job on our radio networks locally telling people that Obama is going to come to your house and take all your guns away. He's going to tax our ammo with huge taxes (But what does it matter if he's going to take your gun anyway?) and more. Guns were not an issue in Obama's campaign. He even put out a statement sup-

porting the ownership of guns for hunting that we circulated to various memberships. Third party special interests flat out lied to the American public on this issue.

Pro Life/Pro Choice: This is a very sensitive issue and one that the Republicans and right-wingers continue to bring up as their trump card whenever an election rolls around. How many of you remember a couple years back when the Republicans controlled both the House and the Senate for six years? Do you remember they had a Republican President during that time period? How about the Supreme Court that was stacked by the Republican President? Why didn't they change

the laws when they had total control? I guess it's because they want to steal your vote every time an election comes around or they really don't care? How many times are the voters going to fall for this one?

In closing I would just like to repeat that it was great experience and I'd like to thank the APWU and especially Myke Reid in our Legislative Department for affording me the opportunity. I'd be remiss if I didn't thank all the APWU members (and I know we had about 10 of them in the Green Bay and Oshkosh area) that donated their time to work on a phone bank or knock on doors to *change the future*.

Union Requests Documentation Of Supervisors Performing Bargaining Unit Work In Small Offices

APWU Web News Article #103-08,
Nov. 5, 2008

APWU President William Burrus has asked the Postal Service to provide documentation that will help the union track the amount of craft work performed by supervisors in small offices.

In a letter dated Oct. 31, the union president asked the USPS to identify:

- All Level 15, 16, 17, and 18 offices by name and finance number;
- The number of career Clerk Craft employees by category for each Accounting Period in Fiscal Years 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008;
- The number of non-bargaining unit employees by category in each office for

the same period;

• The total number of Clerk Craft bargaining unit work hours performed by non-bargaining unit employees.

"The information is necessary to determine whether the Postal Service has violated the contract at these offices," Burrus said, noting that Article 1.6.A and 1.6.B of the Collective Bargaining Agreement restrict the circumstances under which management personnel can perform craft work.

Article 1.6.A. prohibits supervisors from performing craft work — except in an emergency; for training purposes; to assure proper operation of equipment, or to protect the safety of employees and postal property. Article 1.6.B., which applies to offices of

less than 100 bargaining unit employees, allows an additional exception as well: when the duties are included in the supervisor's job description.

Rulings by Arbitrator Sylvester Garrett and Arbitrator Shyam Das have determined that historical practice sets the baseline for the amount of work that can be performed by postmasters and supervisors in small offices.

"The information we have requested will help us determine whether management is shifting work from craft employees to supervisory employees," Burrus said. "In this time of financial difficulty for the Postal Service, we are determined to protect APWU members' jobs."

Changes May Be In Store For Medicare And The FDA That Benefit Retirees

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, Medicare reform looms as a major issue for President-elect Obama and the new Congress. Spending on the program stands at about \$430 billion a year, and the government's vast budget deficit and wider economic turmoil have brought the program's size to the forefront

of the budget debate. Still, the Democratic majority in Congress has vowed to avoid any cuts in Medicare benefits. Possible reforms include removing restrictions on the federal government's ability to negotiate lower drug prices with pharmaceutical companies, and reducing payments to private insurers through

the Medicare Advantage program. In another change, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will be getting new leadership that is likely to be tougher on drug makers on a range of issues, from approving new drugs to policing consumer advertising.

— Source Alliance for Retired Americans

The Lighter Side

Are you tired of sissy 'friendship' poems that always sound good but never come close to reality?

Well, here is a list of promises that actually speak of true friendship. You won't see any cutesy little smiley faces on this card-

1. When you are blue — I will try to dislodge whatever is choking you.
2. When you smile — I will know you are plotting something that I must be involved in.
3. When you're scared — we will high tail it out of here.
4. When you are worried — I will tell you horrible stories about how much worse it could be (until you quit whining, ya big baby!)
5. When you are confused — I will use smaller words.
6. When you are sick — Stay away from me until you are well again. I don't want whatever you have.
7. When you fall — I'll pick you up and dust you off— But first I'll laugh my ass off!
8. This is my oath . . . I pledge it to the end. 'Why?' you may ask — because you're my FRIEND!

— Source: *My Good Friend* — Hank Greenberg

First-Ever Layoffs Loom At Postal Service

by David Yao, Vice President of the Greater Seattle Area Local APWU

The U.S. Postal Service faces a serious financial shortfall that is accelerating reductions in its workforce and raising the possibility of the first-ever layoffs of career employees.

Reduced mail volume, rising costs, and a newly enacted cap on rate increases all have taken a toll on the Postal Service's finances. A gradual shift to electronic communications and bill payment is shrinking the number of first-class letters, a mainstay of postal revenues. And the current economic downturn has led to drops in advertising mail volume.

Increasing fuel prices have been a big factor in worsening postal finances, compounded by a legal restriction enacted two years ago against raising the price of most services beyond the rate of inflation. The cap on rate increases was a major victory for the big mailing industry, but combined with rising costs, it has seriously squeezed the postal budget.

Unionized postal workers have not yet experienced layoffs, which have been confined to casual employees, a small percentage of the workforce.

But Postmaster General John Potter, after reporting losses of \$2.3 billion in the fiscal year ending September 30, informed the unions that 16,000 craft employees (out of approximately 600,000) are not protected by contractual, seniority-based no-layoff clauses. The Postal Service is offering early retirement which, based on acceptance rates thus far, will have around 7,000 takers. In early 2009, when

the number of early retirees will be known and income can be assessed for the traditionally profitable fourth quarter, there's a chance that the first layoffs of craft employees may occur.

DAY SHIFT ENDANGERED

Cost pressures are having other effects. Most of the sorting and processing of mail already occurs between 3 p.m. and 6 a.m. But, without notice to the affected unions, postal plant managers have been told to plan for ending day shift operations. If implemented, this would force thousands of clerks (represented by American Postal Workers Union) and mailhandlers (National Postal Mailhandlers Union) out of the more desirable day-shift assignments.

The elimination of daytime jobs would disrupt the family lives and the physical health of those displaced, mostly high-seniority workers. APWU President Bill Burrus has speculated that this action is partly aimed at pushing them to retire.

One proposal to recoup costs would be to ask Congress for an exception to the rate cap, pointing to the cost of fuel. However, one union president has cautioned that too big an increase might further reduce business and drive the shift to e-communication.

The situation may encourage management, or the U.S. government, to push for more subcontracting or privatization, areas of long-standing battles with the unions. For example, the Postal Service recently asked for bids from private companies to outsource work carried out by its network of bulk mail centers. Unions have responded by pushing for favor-

able legislation, and by pointing out the disagreements on privatization between major-party candidates in the presidential and congressional elections.

Postal workers have been relatively immune from the concessions that have hit other industries. We now face a set of circumstances, termed "a perfect storm" by Burrus, that will challenge the ability

of the unions to protect postal jobs, pay, and working conditions.

— SOURCE: LABOR NOTES

Dates To Remember . . .

Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB)

Enroll via *PostalEASE*.

November 10 – December 9, 2008, 5:00pm Central Time. 2009 FEHB Guides mailed to employees in November.

Flexible Spending Accounts

Enroll via *PostalEASE* November 10 – December 28, 2008, 5:00pm Central Time. \$5,000 maximum Health Care or Dependent Care.

Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP)

Enroll via OPM's BENEFEDS portal on Internet.

November 10 – December 8, 2008, 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time. 2009 Guide mailed in November with details and costs. Must be eligible for FEHB. Premiums withheld on pretax basis. Group insurance/no USPS contribution.

<http://www.benefeds.com> or 877-888-3337.

Annual Leave Exchange

Enroll via *PostalEASE*.

November 15 – December 15, 2008, 11:59 p.m. Central Time.

Bargaining unit employees (Rate Schedule Codes C,K,M,N,P,T,Y) may exchange from 8 to 40 hours if annual leave balance is at least 440 hours & used less than 75 hours of sick leave. Payment received in January 23 paycheck.

For More Information:

From a personal computer, go to:

<http://litebluc.usps.gov>

From a postal computer, go to:

<http://postalpeople.usps.gov>

PostalEASE 1-877-477-3273

HRSSC 1-877-477-3273, option 5

HRSSC TDD/TTY 1-866-260-7507

Combined Federal Campaign

The Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) is underway throughout the Postal Service again this year. CFC is the only opportunity we have as postal employees to donate to our favorite charities via payroll deduction. Please consider giving a donation of at least 1 or 2 dollars (or more if you can) when your solicitor comes around to you. All these smaller donations add up to help those not as fortunate as us. I don't know anyone in my work place that would miss a dollar a pay period.

Did You Know . . .

Of five issues suggested to voters in an exit poll survey, 6 in 10 chose the economy as the most important one facing the country (*New York Times*).

Become part of a progressive grassroots movement!

— Source: *Alliance for Retired Americans*



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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



There was no holding back. Everyone got involved during Labor 2008. This photo was taken while leafleting at Marinette Marine one Friday Morning.

— Photo by: John E. Durben