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Beyond Wisconsin
The untold story of citizen resistance in the Northwest

By Gary Sandusky

Wisconsin is in the forefront of the public's mind for its aggressive right-wing governor and his legislative allies. The drama that played out on the national stage last winter included targeted assaults on public-sector unions, draconian budget cuts, and an inspiring push-back by labor and its supporters that observers have dubbed the "Wisconsin Effect."

The idea of a Wisconsin effect obscures the reality that people in many states are responding to challenges eerily similar to Wisconsin's. Other state governments are also eroding collective-bargaining rights and balancing state budgets on the backs of low-income people. Huge state budget and tax battles continue. And moderate legislators are under tremendous pressure to conform to the lock-step discipline of their right-wing colleagues.

The main difference between the Wisconsin fight and other state battles is that the latter have not become national media stories. You can find stories of a push-back in local media, but the national press, by and large, has not covered the momentum created by everyday citizens responding to similar attacks by state legislatures nationwide.

The national playbook
Two parts of this story have escaped national coverage. The first is that state after state has experienced many of the same political dynamics Wisconsin did: attempts by conservative political forces to erode the role of labor, severely cut budgets and deny states new tax revenues. Their national playbook bore the fingerprints of major Tea Party funders Charles and David Koch, as was obvious to organizers in Idaho, Montana and Washington, where groups affiliated with the Alliance for a Just Society have been deeply engaged organizing a countermovement. Here are just two of the plays in the national playbook:

Play one: Artificially depress state revenues to foster an exaggerated sense of fiscal crisis and create false urgency for budget cuts.
- A 2010 Washington ballot measure increased the number of legislative votes needed to raise new tax revenues. A Montana initiative eliminated a tax affordable housing advocates hoped to use for a housing trust fund.
- State legislative committees in Montana and Idaho ignored official state revenue projections, instead inventing artificially low ones to make the case for cutting the budget.

Play two: Target cuts to a broad range of public services, including severe cuts to Medicaid. Cutting the state-funded portion of the Medicaid budget means walking away from federal matching dollars.
- Idaho cut Medicaid by $35 million. As a result, over 42,000 people will lose access to preventative dental care, 6,500 will lose optometry, vision, and podiatry benefits, and nearly 3,000 people with serious mental illness will face reduced access to rehabilitation services.
- Washington froze enrollment for its Medicaid-based health plan, which now serves about 40,000 low-income residents. The state plans to reduce enrollment to 37,000 in 2012 and 33,000 in 2013. The legislature also reduced in-home personal-care hours for 45,000 seniors and persons with disabilities, by 10 percent.

The Northwest countermovement
The second untold story is the unprecedented scale and scope of resistance to these attacks. People across the country watched Wisconsin's citizens stand together and push back through the lens of the national media. This pivotal moment undoubtedly continued on page 2.
Beyond Wisconsin

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raised the bar on what grassroots and labor organizers believed was possible. But it's unfair to the citizens of Idaho, Montana, Washington and many other states to suggest that they did not rise to the occasion until prompted by Wisconsin's example.

In Washington, the Washington Community Action Network (Washington CAN!) mobilized a broad-based coalition to oppose state budget cuts that culminated in a rally of 7,000 people. In Idaho, 5,000 people—about three percent of the state's population—rallied to protest Medicaid cuts, spearheaded by Medicaid Matters in Idaho!, a coalition of disability advocacy groups, together with the Idaho Community Action Network (ICAN).

But Montana's citizens really turned the tide, giving the nation an inspiring example of broad-based organizing coupled with a winning legislative strategy. In Montana, citizens blunted or defeated most of the harsh public-policy measures and budget cuts the newly-Republican state legislature proposed.

Grassroots organizers delivered citizen power to the Helena capitol in record numbers, culminating in a rally of over 2,000 people last April—the largest in memory—to oppose budget cuts and attacks on public workers' unions. "I know just how critical these state-funded services are," said Connie Brox, a nursing-home worker from Butte. "When my kids were growing up, we depended on several programs to help make ends meet, even while I was working several jobs."

A diverse coalition of faith-based, labor, small-business, rural, Native American and human-rights groups effectively mobilized public opinion against the right wing's agenda, driving public disapproval of the Montana legislature to 72 percent.

As a result, the Governor vetoed the vast majority of cuts the legislature delivered to his desk. Montanans got "about the best budget we could have hoped for," says Tara Veazey, director of the Montana Budget and Policy Center.

True, there were mitigating factors working in the public's favor. The revenue dip and resulting budget crunch were not so severe in Montana compared with other states. And Montana has a populist Democratic Governor, Brian Schweitzer, who uses colorful words for lawmakers in his state. "Some of these legislators, they draft bills just to get an effect from the people," he said.

Cuts to Montana's Public Health & Human Services Programs

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<th>Service</th>
<th>Cuts Voted by Legislature</th>
<th>Cuts in Final Budget</th>
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<td>Supplemental nutrition assistance</td>
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<td>Foster care benefits for high risk children</td>
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<td>Total Cuts</td>
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</table>

Source: Montana Budget and Policy Center
Which Side Are You On?

Bowed but unbroken, Wisconsin’s organizers battle to hold the line and build a movement

By Diane Farsetta

They say that in Wisconsin, there are no neutrals there. You’re either with the workers, or with the billionaires.

-Wisconsin protesters in the Capitol Rotunda last February

Every weekday at noon, a hundred or so union members, peace activists, students, anarchists and new protesters gather in Madison, Wisconsin for the Solidarity Sing-Along, giving new life to old union standards like Florence Reece’s “Which Side Are You On?” They wave signs, clap, stomp and sway, meting out applause or cries of “Shame!” to legislators who venture into the Capitol Rotunda.

Since the Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice launched the sing-along in early March, its weekly presence has kept legislators on notice that people know which side they’re on, and will hold them accountable for their votes.

It’s been six months since national media descended on Madison to cover unprecedented pro-labor protests against Governor Walker’s successful attempt to undermine the collective bargaining rights of public-sector unions. While the massive rallies and Capitol occupation are over—for now—organizing continues against far-right assaults on the rights of workers, immigrants and the poor.

As last winter’s protests developed into this summer’s campaigns to recall state senators, the Rotunda sing-along energized and connected grassroots volunteers. Organizers worked the crowd with flyers and clipboards, recruiting people to phone bank or canvass their fellow citizens for help recalling Republican state senators who voted for the Governor’s notorious budget and union-busting bill.

Wisconsin progressives have lost two big battles this year. Public workers have lost most of their collective bargaining rights. Also, the two-year budget passed with draconian cuts to public education, aid to cities and towns, and state healthcare programs, while adding new tax breaks for corporations and upper-income Wisconsinites.

The Governor’s surprise attack on unions—disguised as a “budget repair” measure—is already shrinking the paychecks of public workers by about ten percent. “State employees will see their pay cuts...in their August 25 paychecks,” explains Jim Cavanaugh of the South Central Federation of Labor, adding that lower-paid state employees will see larger pay cuts than higher-paid workers. “Even those workers whose unions hurried to negotiate long-term contracts ahead of the passage of the legislation in most cases will see pay cuts, usually in the form of increased payments for pension and health insurance plans. They agreed to these cuts in order to save their unions.”

The private sector will also suffer. Public-sector pay cuts alone will cost the state nearly one billion dollars in lost economic activity, according to the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, D.C. That figure doesn’t even include the impact of cuts to earned-income and homestead tax credits, both of which boost the spending power of low-income families.

ALEC’s hidden hand

Contrary to his claims, Governor Scott Walker’s campaign platform did not include decimating labor rights, education or other public resources. If he had made his plans clear, voters may not have elected him last year. Wisconsin, after all, is the birthplace of the largest public workers’ union in the country—the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees—founded right in Madison in 1932.

Dian Palmer, President of SEIU Health-care Wisconsin, a local affiliate of the Service Employees International Union, said Governor Walker’s actions took unions by surprise. “We knew that Walker had done devastating things to public workers in Milwaukee County,” she said, referring to Walker’s eight-year tenure as County Executive there. “But we didn’t think the time was right for him to expand those policies statewide. And I didn’t think he would put it in the budget repair bill. I kept on going back and forth - yes, he might try it, no, he wouldn’t dare. When he did, I was devastated.”

Observers say that Governor Walker did not come up with his policy agenda on his own. The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) has co-written similar initiatives appearing in proposed legislation across the country. The low-profile, corporate-funded conservative think tank influences state-level policies by disseminating “model” bills for state legislatures to enact. Corporate executives develop legislation in committee, where they sit alongside state legislators. Then the legislators pass the bills off in their home states as their own initiatives. The results—evident in Wisconsin and elsewhere—are laws that erode consumer protections, attack workers’ rights, privatize public schools, relax gun restrictions and criminalize immigrants.

For example, the Wisconsin legislature recently introduced an anti-immigrant bill remarkably similar to Arizona’s infamous “Papers, please” law. National Public

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Showdown in the Heartland

Wisconsin digs in to defend working families

By Linda Meric

Media coverage of tens of thousands of demonstrators in Wisconsin’s state capital last winter focused on Governor Scott Walker’s move to strip public employees of collective-bargaining rights. Members of 9to5, National Association of Working Women stood with others defending unions and calling for a fair budget deal for working families. But the Governor’s agenda is broader than union busting. He and his Republican allies aim to shrink and debilitate government at the expense of low-income and middle-class families, denying the promise of equality and economic opportunity that lies at the heart of the American Dream.

Public employment provides a path to the middle class for women and people of color denied access to private-sector jobs offering benefits and a living wage. The public sector also provides critical services—education, safety and healthcare—that disproportionately impact communities of color, low-income women, and families.

Public workers don’t make big bucks, but they are the backbone of the middle class. They are the teachers who tutor struggling students to prepare for college or vocational school, the nurses who vaccinate children against polio and diphtheria and the nine-dollar-per-hour home-healthcare workers helping seniors and people with disabilities to remain in their homes. They keep our economy humming by paying their mortgages, and keep our small businesses afloat by buying groceries, clothing and other goods.

For years, Wisconsin’s state workers paid for their retirement pensions and healthcare plans through deferred wages—a negotiated reduction in paycheck earnings in exchange for benefits. Even still, their unions accepted wage and benefit concessions to help balance the state budget. Meanwhile, Republican legislators continue to give tax breaks to corporations and the rich, increasing budget deficits while gutting already-thin funding for education, police, firefighting and other public services.

Let’s be clear: this showdown is not about balancing the state budget. It’s about union busting and siphoning funds from low-income and middle-class families to benefit corporate campaign contributors. It’s about shrinking the role of government so that it has less funding, less infrastructure and less ability to meet public needs. Imagine a country where public services that most Americans take for granted—schools, hospitals, street lights—are available only to those who can afford to pay for them on an individual basis.

Targeting vulnerable workers

Wisconsin’s new laws target all working families, not just state workers. For example, the Governor’s budget slashed healthcare for the 1.1 million people who rely on Medicaid. It also contains onerous cuts to the state’s BadgerCare program, which provides subsidized health insurance to families with children who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but can’t afford private health insurance, as well as BadgerCare Plus, which offers public health insurance to low-income single adults. The budget also cuts childcare assistance for low-income families, critical for parents seeking to find and retain employment.

Pending legislation would roll back benefits under Wisconsin’s Family and Medical Leave Act, which are more generous than federal law. Under the new law, employees who work less than 25 hours per week would lose eligibility for family leave altogether. All employees would lose their ability to use accrued sick pay for family leave. The measure would force workers to take unpaid leave for emergencies, putting their homes, families and jobs at risk.

In May, the state legislature targeted Milwaukee’s Paid Sick Leave Ordinance, a measure requiring private companies to pay sick leave to all workers within city limits—including part-time and temporary employees. The new state law bars any local government from enacting such ordinances. The Governor signed the new law just two months after 9to5 overcame a court injunction brought by business opponents, nullifying a city ordinance that seventy percent of Milwaukee’s electorate had supported in 2008.

Non-budgetary laws also include stricter voter ID requirements and the elimination of same-day voter registration, which effectively disenfranchise people of color, low-income people, the elderly and the young, especially college students.

Republican lawmakers say their legislation boosts industry and job growth. But Wisconsin’s biggest companies are already thriving, even during the recession. Mercury Marine, for example, reported profits of $1.1 billion between 2000 and 2007, but paid no state income tax. Harley-Davidson’s profits also increased during this period, but according to The New York Times, these profits have been “mostly going to shareholders instead of the broader economy.” Nevertheless, the continued on page 5

Photo by Rebecca Kemble
Wisconsin recall elections this summer, organized labor helped collected over 1.3 million signatures, well over the 231,000 continued on page 6

The big picture

The Wisconsin showdown has nothing to do with fiscal crisis. This fact was amply demonstrated by blogger Ian Murphy’s famous prank telephone call to Governor Walker, impersonating anti-union billionaire David Koch. Believing the ruse, Walker spoke openly of his intention to crush Wisconsin’s public unions, calling Ronald Reagan’s firing of air-traffic controllers the “defining moment of his political career.” He expressed hopes that new Republican governors could follow suit in Ohio, Florida, Michigan, and nationwide.

Governor Walker’s anti-union, anti-community, anti-government agenda is not limited to Wisconsin. Tea Party-backed elected officials and ideological conservatives are attacking unions and working families in other states too. This year, forty state legislatures have proposed measures to strip labor rights and protections from public and private workers; 26 have succeeded. In Ohio and Indiana, state childcare and home-health workers face attacks on their jobs, pay, benefits and collective bargaining rights. Legislatures in New Jersey, New York, Florida and other states are attacking public employees’ pensions, blaming them for fiscal crises. Missouri and other states are following Wisconsin’s lead in limiting voting access for under-represented groups.

Reinvigorating the movement for economic justice

But these attacks are just part of the picture. People across Wisconsin—working women, communities of color, farmers, students, faith leaders, and private and public union employees—are standing shoulder to shoulder to fight back. We saw it in the spring takeovers of the State Capitol in Madison; we continue to see it in the door-to-door organizing, community forums, demonstrations and recall elections that recently unseated two Republican lawmakers who had voted to eliminate collective bargaining rights.

Together with labor and community organizers, 9to5 Milwaukee activists brought carloads of demonstrators to Madison and led the legal defense of Milwaukee’s paid sick leave ordinance. We conducted get-out-the-vote canvassing for the recall elections. We continue to organize community speak-outs on the state budget and access to childcare, using both traditional and social media to engage the public. That kind of organizing has launched activists across the country into action.

The reinvigorated labor movement has put boots on the ground in key Midwestern states, mobilizing citizens to defend hard-won labor protections. Besides throwing its weight behind the Wisconsin recall elections this summer, organized labor helped mobilize a “citizen’s veto” drive against Ohio’s anti-union law, putting repeal of that law on the November ballot. Volunteers collected over 1.3 million signatures, well over the 231,000

Shared Values, Shared Struggles

Wisconsin’s rural and urban working families unite

By Dana Schultz

From the smallest farm town to the busiest street in downtown Milwaukee, Wisconsin’s working families are battling for their livelihoods—and they’re standing together.

I was born and raised on a 50-head dairy farm in North Central Wisconsin. Like many of our neighbors, we sold our cows in the 1990s, forced out by volatile milk prices. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee soon recruited me for college basketball. But I also led a student campaign to make sure university clothing suppliers used sweatshop-free labor. That battle won, I moved from campus to community, organizing low-wage working women with the Milwaukee chapter of 9to5.

It’s not much of a stretch from defending family farms to defending workers’ rights. As an organizer, you’re always trying to broaden coalitions to reach people with shared struggles. In 2010 I challenged a Republican incumbent’s seat in the Wisconsin State Assembly, going house to house along miles of unpaved rural roads and campaigning in towns with double-digit populations.

It didn’t take me long to see that the struggles and values of family farmers, loggers, factory workers, teachers and parents in rural Wisconsin overlapped with those of Black, Brown, and white working women in Central City Milwaukee. Both rural and urban workers value economic security, a just wage, reasonable hours and dignity at the workplace. Both rural and urban families value equal opportunities for their children, with good schools and livable neighborhoods. And both rural and urban communities value local control over decisions that affect them. Exaggerating rural and urban difference is just another way bosses pit one group of workers against the other.

When Governor Walker revealed plans last February to bust public-sector unions and balance budgets on the backs of women and the poor, all our communities joined forces in massive protests at the state capitol. Firefighters rallied with kindergarten teachers; students rallied with grandmothers in reindeer sweaters. Immigrant, women’s and workers’ rights groups united with organized labor, public and private. 9to5 mobilized carloads of low-income women to testify before the state senate in support of paid sick leave for Milwaukee workers and opposing rollbacks to the Wisconsin Family and Medical Leave Act. I also helped lead the Farmer Labor Solidarity Tractorcade rally, where family farmers reminded protesters that attacks on organized labor, healthcare and education are farmers’ issues, too. Rural and urban, Wisconsinites stood in solidarity with public-sector workers and the poor, because we’re all in this struggle together.

Dana Schultz is Lead Organizer of the Milwaukee, Wisconsin Office of 9to5, National Organization of Working Women, a RESIST ally.

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Which side are you on?
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Radio reported late last year that the Corrections Corporation of America—a private prison company that profits from detaining immigrants—used its ALEC membership to help draft and pass the Arizona law. Both the Arizona and Wisconsin statutes require local police to investigate the immigration status of anyone they detain—including for minor traffic violations—if they have “reasonable suspicion” the person is unlawfully present in the US. Police must turn over to immigration authorities anyone whose status they can’t verify. Wisconsin’s Assembly Bill 173 does not define “reasonable suspicion,” inviting racial profiling. State law enforcement officials argue that the proposed law would undermine public safety by making Latin® and other immigrant crime victims reluctant to contact the police.

Should Wisconsin pass the law, it will have harsh bedfellows. Federal judges have struck down portions of similar “Paper’s please” provisions in Arizona, Utah and Georgia, but Wisconsin appears determined to join Alabama and South Carolina in proceeding anyway. It’s a far cry from 2009, when Wisconsin became the 11th state to offer in-state college tuition rates to undocumented children graduating from Wisconsin high schools—and the only state that year to pass a pro-immigrant measure. Not even two years later, Walker’s budget deal repealed the law.

It’s no coincidence that immigrants and workers are both under attack. Racism and economic insecurity make immigrants a popular scapegoat for politicians hoping to divide and distract workers while corporate profits rise. Workers become afraid of organizing for fair wages, work conditions and basic rights, instead turning on each other.

Beyond electoral politics
Wisconsin’s unions and other activists are battling to hold the line against more legislative onslaughts this fall, including still more bills targeting immigrants, limiting women’s reproductive rights, and promoting nuclear power. Thanks to Governor Walker, state unions will have to mobilize their memberships just to survive yearly recertification, which now requires a majority vote of all members—not just voting members. Though activists failed to win a senate majority in the recall elections this summer, they haven’t given up hope of recalling Governor Walker next year.

Rabbi Renee Bauer, Director of the Interfaith Coalition for Worker Justice of South Central Wisconsin, believes a lasting solution lies in mobilizing the power of Wisconsin’s people. “Organized labor is an essential component of a just and equitable society,” she says. “We need to do a lot of education about the historic role of unions and collective bargaining. Ultimately, we need to focus on sustaining and building a lasting workers’ movement here. We cannot just focus on legislators or legislative action, but need to focus on the thousands upon thousands of Wisconsin residents who raised their voices and marched on the Capitol. That is where there is power.”

Diane Farsetta is Executive Director of the Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice, a RESIST grantee that facilitates communication, coalition-building and other activities among its 166 member organizations, including the labor rights groups mentioned in this article.

Heartland
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they needed. Progressives in nine other states have also defeated anti-worker legislative agendas. The so-called “right to work” anti-union laws that lawmakers introduced in 20 states this year have yet to become law, according to the Progressive States Network.

The labor struggle continues in the economic arena as well. As we go to press, Verizon’s workers are striking to protect their jobs, pay and benefits. The Communications Workers of America and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers are demanding their workers’ fair share of the $19 billion in profits that Verizon made in the last four years—a third of it in the last six months.

Coordinated attacks on labor rights and government services are mobilizing citizens to fight back. It’s time to work for a long-term proactive agenda that goes beyond defending labor standards and toward winning a better economic future for working families.

Linda Meric is the Executive Director of 9to5, National Association of Working Women, a RESIST ally. 9to5 is an national membership-based organization of low-income women working to improve policies on issues that directly affect them.

Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice staff Steve Burns with members Joy and Steve First during the round-the-clock occupation at the capitol in February.
Beyond Wisconsin
continued from page 2

told Fox News last March. "And unfortu-
nately, it kind of makes some of them look
bat-crap crazy."

But these factors don’t fully account for
the positive outcome of the 2011 Montana
legislative session, which owes much to
the collective efforts of the Montana Organiz­
ing Project (MOP), the Partnership for
Montana’s Future coalition and the state’s
largest teachers union, the Montana Educa­
tion Association / Montana Federation of
Teachers (MEA-MFT).

The MEA-MFT and its coalition partners
spearheaded a largely women-led organiz­
ing effort distinguished by a remarkable
amount of low-ego collaboration. For its
part, MOP turned out nearly a quarter of the
Helena rally-goers, expanding well beyond
its usual progressive and geographic base.
MOP’s turnout included most of the Native
American demonstrators (thanks to Indian
People’s Action, a RESIST grantee), most of
the faith-based leadership, the small-busi­
ness contingent, blue-collar labor, and the
bulk of protesters from rural communities.

Bringing over 2,000 geographically­
dispersed people to the state capital—itself
only about 28,000 strong—was a daunting
logistical challenge. Montana, with a land
mass equal to Vermont, New Hampshire,
Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut,
New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Dela­
ware and Maryland combined, has only
975,000 residents. The driving distances are
immense. MOP hosted people who spent
up to 14 hours in a bus or a car to attend a
two-hour event. MOP’s close alliance with
the MEA-MFT was critical, as the teacher’s
union delivered buses to several key com­
munities.

MOP’s inclusion of geographically­
broad and racially-diverse voices lent
unusual credibility to our organizing. Our
slogan, “unusual voices from unusual plac­
es,” reflects our belief that it is imperative
to cross boundaries of culture, race, faith,
class and geography. This commitment to
breadth and diversity fueled our power to
alter the course of the 2011 Montana State
Legislature.

Building momentum from
Montana

Montana is not unique. We have an
opportunity to build momentum by cap­
turing the emerging discontent people
express toward the harsh world view of
the extreme Right. State legislative battles
create an opportunity for broad-based
progressive organizing. It’s not enough for
groups to deliver their separately-organized
constituencies. We can move from our
defensive posture only by expanding who
we represent and collaborating with other
progressive groups.

After Montana’s 2011 legislative ses­
ion ended last May, MOP field staff went
back on the road to conduct 24 listening
sessions across the state, involving liter­
ally hundreds of people. One staffer alone
logged 5,500 miles in a six-week period.
We assessed how Montanans felt about
the legislative outcome and the tough work
ahead. As Montanans say, “we dodged a
bullet this time.” We want to start from a
different place in 2012 and 2013. But that
means stretching ourselves geographi­
cally and engaging with people outside our
comfort zone.

Gary Sandusky is the Northwest Senior
Organizer for Center for Community Change,
a national organization and RESIST ally
working to build the organizing capacity of
groups and networks like Alliance for a Just
Society. He is also the founder of the Montana
Organizing Project (MOP). MOP, ICAN,
and Washington Can! are all members of the
Alliance’s national network.
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Inside this issue:
Citizen resistance in Wisconsin and beyond

Meet RESIST

GRANT RECIPIENTS

RESIST awards grants six times a year to groups throughout the United States engaged in organizing for social, economic and environmental justice. In this issue of the Newsletter we list a few grant recipients from our most recent allocation cycle in August of 2011. For more information, visit the RESIST website at www.resistinc.org or contact the groups directly.

Voz Hispana Causa Chavista
300 Young Street, Woodburn, Oregon 97071. www.pcinu.org

Voz Hispana Causa Chavista builds and mobilizes the political power of Latinos in Woodburn, Oregon through community organizing and civic empowerment. Woodburn is the largest municipality in Oregon with a Latino majority, yet its institutions marginalize Latinos. Its largely Mexican immigrant community provides manual labor to the region’s agricultural, construction and service industries. Ninety percent of students in its public school district are Latino. RESIST’s Hell Yes! grant of $4,000 will help Voz Hispana make Woodburn’s public schools accountable to its Latino students.

GI Voice
15109 Union Avenue SW, Lakewood, Washington 98498. www.coffeestrong.com

GI Voice is a non-profit organization that operates Coffee Strong, a veteran-owned and veteran-operated GI coffeehouse located just outside the gates of Joint Base Lewis-McChord, one of the largest military bases on the West Coast. Founded in 2008 to provide a safe space for armed service members, veterans and their families, GI Voice has evolved from providing counseling, referrals and other resources to offering weekly events, workshops and venues for anti-war veterans and their families. RESIST’s Hell Yes! grant of $4,000 will assist GI Voice as it continues its work creating safe venues for soldiers and veterans to speak openly on issues of war and military life.

Missouri Immigrant and Refugee Advocates
2725 Clifton Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63139. www.mira-mo.org

Founded in 2006, Missouri Immigrant and Refugee Advocates (MIRA) is a coalition of organizations from faith, labor, community, business and direct-service communities that recognize the intrinsic value of all people. MIRA organizes and advocates for the basic rights of all immigrants, opposing measures and policies in the state that create an unwelcoming climate for immigrants and refugees. RESIST’s $4,000 grant will enable MIRA to continue its organizing and advocacy for immigrant rights.

The STAY Project (Stay Together Appalachian Youth!)
91 Madison Avenue, Whitesburg, Kentucky 41858. www.thestayproject.org

The STAY Project (Stay Together Appalachian Youth!) is a diverse regional network of young people throughout Central Appalachia working together to advocate for and actively participate in their home mountain communities. The project grew out of an Appalachian Studies conference in 2007, where young participants said they had limited access to social change movements and few opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge to participate. Two years later, these young people founded the STAY project. RESIST’s Hell Yes! grant of $4,000 will enable The STAY Project to train youth leaders to organize around basic human rights issues in their communities.