

In This Issue:	
Why Unions Matter.....1	Awards Dinner
Awards Dinner.....1	Photos.....5
Congress Watch.....2	Who is a Trump
Econ 101 .....3	Supporter .....14
Voter Forums.....4	Trump Sandwich.....14

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# Why Unions Matter

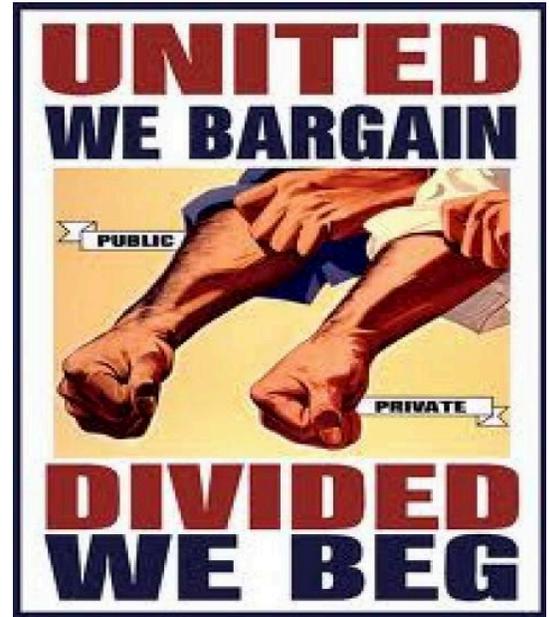
By Eleonora di Liscia

Our democracy is not perfect.

With human beings involved, how could it be? But we believe in our democracy. Our democracy matters. That's why we fight so hard to preserve it, why we fight so hard to make it better.

Unions are an integral part of that democracy, if for no other reason than to keep us from relapsing into a nation of serfs and masters. If the Constitution aims to prevent the tyranny of one group over another, then unions fit squarely into that mission.

Unions are not perfect. They are run by people with all their many drives, defects, and desires. But like our democracy, unions matter. In the past, they mattered enough that workers died organizing them. And they matter enough now that we must fight to protect them.



*continued on page 15*



# Tenth News

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JANUARY 2016 Illinois Tenth Congressional District Democrats Newsletter Volume 13, Edition 1

## “King of the Iowa Caucuses” Keynotes Awards Dinner

By Rosemary Heilemann

As with many awards events, half the fun of attending the Tenth Dems Annual Awards Dinner on December 16 at the Hyatt Deerfield was spotting all the celebrities. In this case, the celebrities were elected officials, candidates, and party leaders. In addition to being there to enjoy good food and good company and honor awardees, along with the standing-room-only crowd they came to hear David Yepsen, longtime chief political writer for The Des Moines Register and current director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at SIU, who shared some timely observations about the Iowa caucuses.

In his keynote address, Yepsen talked about the history, process, and effect of the Iowa caucuses. Back in the 1980s, Iowa and New Hampshire compromised their ongoing competition over which state would have the first official say about presidential nominees by agreeing that Iowa could go first with caucuses and New Hampshire's primary would remain the first in the nation. Yepsen disclosed that the Democratic caucus process is complex and requires participants to spend several hours caucusing whereas Republicans conduct a simpler, quicker straw poll.

Yepsen noted that both Clinton and Sanders have put together large campaign organizations in Iowa, which demonstrates how important the Iowa caucuses have become since their inception under the leadership of Iowa Governor Harold Hughes. Hughes was angered by the infamous 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago, and spearheaded the formation of the caucuses under the umbrella of the McGovern Election Reform Commission.

In 1972, Yepsen explained, George McGovern went to Iowa to get a little publicity, the media obliged, and McGovern placed second and eventually won the Democratic nomination. After that, the more candidates came to Iowa, the more the media came, and so forth, until the present day when so much attention is focused on Iowa.



*Keynote Speaker David Yepsen*

*continued on page 13*

# CONGRESS WATCH:

## DOUBLE-TALK DOLD SELLS HIMSELF WHILE SELLING US OUT



By Laurence D. Schiller

Since Republican Bob Dold's first run for Congress, he has sold himself as a small businessman who ran for office as a moderate, independent Republican. He projected the image of a man who could really be a moderate in either party, progressive in social views but desiring to shrink government. In furtherance of projecting this image, as the GOP has rumbled further into rightwing paranoia and moral bankruptcy, Double-Talk Dold has issued release after release for 10th District consumption, painting himself as the moderate voice who should be kept in Congress by a district that voted for Obama twice, because HE is the guy to work with Democrats to make government work and to bring his party back to the middle of the political spectrum.

But is he?

Examine Dold's press releases. While the word "bipartisan" appears over and over again, the word "Republican" almost never does. Strange, indeed, for someone who signed a lengthy contract with the National Republican Congressional Committee in which he promised to lay out his legislative agenda in detail and provide "political justifications for those goals" in exchange for Republican financial support for his campaign.

Nor does Dold ever reveal to 10th District voters that he has been a Republican operative for decades. Far from being Cincinnatus called from his farm to defend Rome from mortal enemies, Double-Talk Dold worked for Dan Quayle and then Bob Dole's presidential campaign, subsequently remaining in Washington during the Clinton administration to work with the Clinton Impeachment Committee. This is the resume of a typical Washington partisan political operative if there ever was one. But you won't find this information on Dold's website or in any of his campaign literature.

The real question, then, is: Is Dold really the guy he says he is? He promises to bring his party back to moderation, but has he? More important, if he really is the moderate small businessman who votes  
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### Unlike Double-Talk Dold, Both Democratic Candidates for Congress Have Proven to be Strong Advocates for Gun Safety

We reached out to the campaigns of both Democratic candidates for Congress and requested a short statement from each about gun safety.

From the Schneider campaign:

*Brad is a proven, principled, and progressive leader on gun safety. His first speech from the floor of Congress was on standing up to the NRA, calling for sensible gun safety legislation. In Congress, he sponsored legislation to require universal background checks, close the gun show loophole, and limit access to military style assault weapons. He also believes in restricting large capacity ammunition clips and reinstating the Federal Assault Weapons Ban. His work and votes in Congress earned him an F from the NRA. He'll never stop fighting the NRA to end the senseless violence tearing our communities and families apart.*

From the Rotering campaign:

*As a Mayor, I had the courage to lead the fight to pass an assault weapons ban, despite direct threats from the NRA. The U.S. Supreme Court allowed Highland Park's ban to stand, clearing a Constitutional path for other U.S. cities to pass similar bans, using ours as a model ordinance. I pushed for state legislation allowing any Illinois municipality to ban assault weapons.*

*As elected representatives, in the absence of action from Washington, it is our responsibility to do everything possible to reduce gun violence. With courageous leadership, we can protect our communities from future mass violence and grief.*

Residents of the 10th Congressional District can be confident that either Democratic contender will work hard in Congress to pass gun safety legislation—something incumbent Republican Bob Dold just tweets about.

# CONGRESS WATCH:

## DOUBLE-TALK DOLD SELLS HIMSELF WHILE SELLING US OUT

against what have been Republican core values since the Tea Party tail has been wagging the GOP mutt, where's the evidence?

The answer to these questions is that Dold is an empty suit, full of promises to progressive constituents, but voting with his party nearly all the time when it counts. For example, he touted his support of a bipartisan measure that would close a loophole in our gun laws that currently allows suspected terrorists access to firearms and explosives but then voted four times to prevent the bill he touted from actually reaching the floor of the House. And he refused to sign a discharge petition that also would have brought the bill to the floor. Obviously, legislation can't pass if it's never taken up. So, while he was tweeting, "I'm pushing for background checks & to keep guns out of hands of criminals, mentally ill, terrorists, domestic abusers," Dold was actually doing just the opposite.

The reality is that Dold has done nothing to promote progressive causes because whenever he publicly supports such a bill, he works with his party to make sure it never passes. His record of failing to move his party toward the center is unblemished because it has never been his intent to do so.

The true Dold is the man whom Paul Ryan (the Republican whose extreme right-wing policies would destroy nearly all social programs designed to help the poor and middle classes, including Social Security and Medicare) calls a reliable conservative and one of the men he counts on in Congress to pass his agenda. Dold has consistently voted for Ryan's extreme budget, and he voted for Ryan to be Speaker of the House, so the admiration is clearly mutual. Ryan's legislative ideas are anathema to the people of the 10th District, and Dold has shown by his voting record that he supports them.

Despite his constant bragging about his purported bipartisan accomplishments, Bob Dold not only has failed to bring his party back to the middle, something he promises on his website, but also has provided the 10th District with no reason to vote for him against a Democrat who truly believes in progressive policies and will act on those beliefs. We can't afford to continue to be represented in Congress by this double-talker. Voters should send Double-Talk Dold packing in 2016.

## Econ. 101: The Myth of Trickle-Down Economics

By Larry A. Marks

*This article is the third in a series.*

Here is the logic. (It is highly flawed logic and I'll explain why we already know that but the GOP is ignoring that fact.)

They say businesses create jobs. (Okay. So far, so good.) They say, as businesses grow they will hire more people. (Uh, oh. The logic just got a bit shaky.) They say, more jobs mean higher payrolls and more people who can buy consumer goods. (That sounds good, but are they really hiring more people or paying higher salaries as they increase their profits?)

So what is going on?

I'm not going to look up the actual number, but of the top 20 companies in the U.S., I bet 12 of them pay no taxes at all other than payroll and real estate taxes.

How on earth can that happen? They are selling their products in the U.S., making money, tons of money in the U.S. How can they pay no taxes?

The GOP has been saying that it's simple: these are the "job creators." We need to give them more and more tax breaks so they will create more and more jobs.

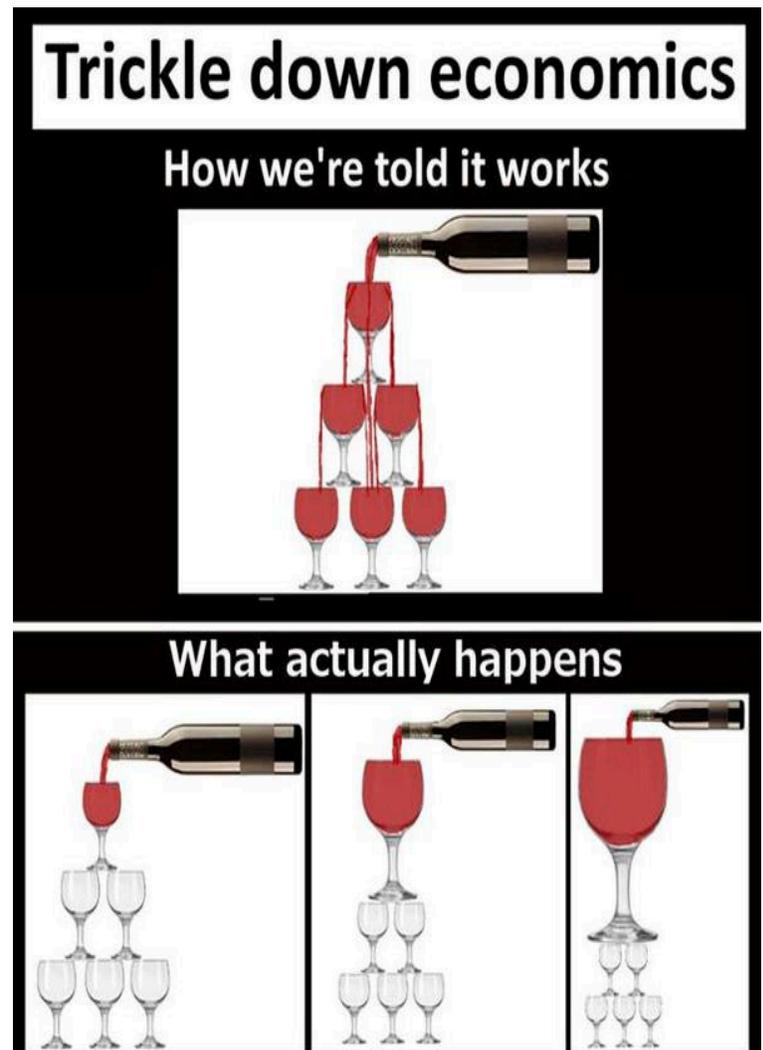
This is the "trickle-down" theory. It's total nonsense, and it's easy to see that.

The so-called job creators are not creating new jobs in any substantial numbers. Still, the employment figures are improving.

So what is really happening? Who is creating these jobs?

This is a fairly simple question. The economy goes through patterns

*(continued on next page)*



of boom and recession on a regular, but unpredictable, basis. When we slide into a recession, the job market is impacted very heavily. That is not the most important factor in measuring a recession, but if you are out of a job, it's number one to you.

What industry sectors lose employment first? Service industries – architects, doctors, restaurants – really any business that sells services such as advertising, marketing, consulting, etc. The second sector to shrink is light manufacturing and retail, which is followed by heavy manufacturing.

When an economic recovery occurs, as we are seeing right now, the first sector to rehire is service, followed by light manufacturing and retail, and then finally heavy manufacturing (which hires many, many workers, often unionized.) So the new jobs we are seeing are in large part the old jobs that were lost due to the recession, and the bulk take the longest to come back because they are tied to heavy manufacturing.

Now, there are those who will say, “Yes, but, it's much more complex than this.” Well, maybe. There are certainly more factors to be considered, such as how many jobs did the large companies push offshore to India, China, and other cheap labor countries that will come back slowly or not at all. But I would contend it's all the same damaged and selfish thinking as not raising wages as profits soar.

So what happens when we cut taxes on companies? The owners, shareholders in those firms, make more money by profit distributions called dividends. What do the employees get? They get to keep their

low-paying jobs. How does this help the economy? It doesn't. It only helps owners of the firms.

Is this true for all companies?

No, there are some very well-run, highly ethical firms out there that work hard to be fair to their employees, firms like Berkshire Hathaway and Costco. There are also those firms that have to get hit on the head a few times but they finally see the light. That's McDonald's.

Then there are those that seem not to care at all about the U.S., companies like Mobil, Exxon, Walmart. I'm sure you know the list as well as I do.

What is the solution?

Taxes are as low right now as they were during the administration of Harry S. Truman. Think about that for a minute. As a country, we are massively more complex, have broad global interests and a military that keeps watch worldwide, and our richest taxpayers are paying taxes that would be familiar to Truman.

Do we need to raise taxes on everyone? No, we don't. The middle class is pretty much choking right now. If we reversed all the tax gifts we have given to the corporations that are larger than \$1 billion in revenue and added a small increase in taxes to our wealthiest citizens, the debt would begin to erode very quickly. If we continue to give tax breaks to those most easily able to pay taxes, you can count on a very slow-moving economy for a very long time.

## Congressional Candidates to Appear in Voter Forums

With the March 15 primaries approaching, 10th Congressional District voters will have the chance to hear both Democratic candidates for Congress in 90-minute forums co-sponsored by Tenth Dems and Lake Forest College.

Former Congressman Brad Schneider will appear on Wednesday evening, January 27, and Highland Park Mayor Nancy Rotering will appear on Wednesday evening, February 10. Both forums will be held at Lily Reid Holt Memorial Chapel on the campus of Lake Forest College and will run from 7:00 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.

Registration is free, and registrants will have the opportunity to submit questions in advance for the moderator to pose to the candidates. In addition, each forum will devote time to allowing live questions from the audience.

You can register for these events at

<https://www.lakeforest.edu/live/events/479855-10th-congressional-district-candidate-forum-with>

and

<https://www.lakeforest.edu/live/events/479856-10th-congressional-district-candidate-forum-with>.

These forums will give voters an excellent opportunity to engage the Democrats seeking to represent the 10th Congressional District. For more information, or to volunteer, go to [tenthdems.org/volunteer](http://tenthdems.org/volunteer) or call **847-266-VOTE (8683)**.



*Congressional Candidate  
Brad Schneider*



*Congressional Candidate  
Nancy Rotering*

# 2015 Tenth Dems Awards Dinner



*Audience members Sharon Sanders and Mark Paul pose questions to Keynote Speaker David Yepsen*



*Program participants, l. to r., Tina Sellers, Sharon Sanders, Dulce Ortiz, Bonnie Berger-Neel, Joe Adler, Barbara Altman, David Yepsen, Dan Pierce, Lauren Beth Gash, Eric Herman, Karen Singer*



*Candidate for U.S. Senate Andrea Zopp*



*Candidate for U.S. Senate Napoleon Harris*

2015 Tenth Dems Awards Dinner



Judge Mitch Hoffman



Floricia Lowe



Hon. Terry Hall



*Steve Sheffey, Judge Mark Levitt, Harry Pascal*



*Jim Neel and Founders Award honoree Bonnie Berger-Neel*



*Barbara Altman and Carol Sente*



*Keynote Speaker David Yepsen*



*Hon. Kathy Ryg and Sheila Schwartz*



*Susan and Malcolm Lee*



*Allan Bergman and Chris Kennedy*



*Susan Dorn and Mimi Weil*



*David Weinstein and Judge Mitch Hoffman*



*Sharon Sanders, Dean of Tenth Dems University*



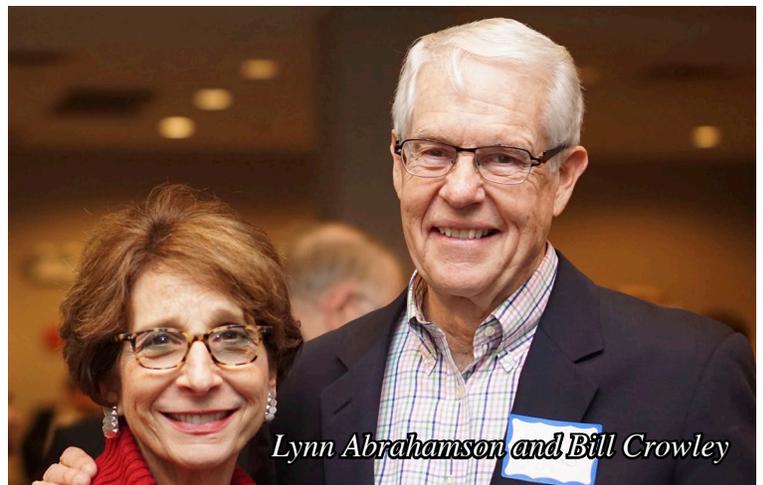
*Keynote Speaker David Yepsen*



*Rep. Sam Yingling (D. 62nd), Rep. Carol Sente (D. 59th), and former Congressman Brad Schneider, candidate for Congress for the 10th District*



*Co-Chair Bonnie Berger-Neel accepts the Founders Award.*



*Lynn Abrahamson and Bill Crowley*



*Bob Honeywell and Hon. Scott Linn*



*Mary Turley, Candidate for Lake County Board*



*Tina Sellers*



*Founding Chair, Hon. Lauren Beth Gash*





*Rep. Elaine Nekritz (D. 57th) and Hon. Kathy Ryg*



*Communications Chair Hon. Ron Schwartz*



*David Weinstein and Erin Cartwright Weinstein, candidate for Clerk of the Circuit Court of Lake County, with Judge Mark Levitt*



*Founding member Dave DuBourdieu speaks about the history of Tenth Dems*



*Elliott Hartstein and Carol Sente*



*Karen Singer and Elizabeth Albert at work at the sign-in table*



*Keynote Speaker David Yepsen*



*Rep. Sam Yingling with Chris Law and Paul Law*



*Joe Adler*



*Founders Award honoree Bonnie Berger-Neel*



*Karen Singer*



*Hon. Scott Linn*



*State Sen. Julie Morrison*



*Hon. Jack Strom*



*Cong. Robyn Gabel*



*Ab Mikva Award honoree Rep. Sam Yingling (D. 62nd)*



*Hon. Kathy Ryg*



*Highland Park Mayor Nancy Rotering, candidate for Congress for the 10th Congressional District*



*Hon. Terry Wilke*



*Sharon Narrod keeps time as candidates and electeds make brief remarks*



*Judge Mitch Hoffman*



*State Sen. Julie Morrison*

Here in Illinois, Democrats have an important job to accomplish: elect candidates who promote the values of the Democratic Party. Such leaders were present in abundance among the enthusiastic crowd of over 100 to honor fellow Democrats for their leadership and service.

State Representative Sam Yingling (D. 62) received the Ab Mikva Leadership Award in recognition of his role as a legislator and his hard-won election victories in a heavily Republican district. The Founders Award went to Tenth Dems Co-Chair Bonnie Berger-Neel for her ongoing contributions to the work of the organization. A tireless leader, Bonnie is the executive director of the Grayslake and Waukegan (Community Connection) offices and also has primary responsibility for oversight of the candidate liaison committee.

Tenth Dems Communications Director Eric Herman earned the Rosenblit Volunteer of the Year Award. Eric leads the large multi-media communications team and takes primary responsibility for strategic messaging. An attorney, Eric also has helped lead the dozens of other lawyers who make up the Tenth Dems Election Protection Team, responding to election day irregularities and advocating for citizens' right to vote.

While all Democratic candidates and elected officials present were invited to speak briefly to introduce themselves, the candidates running in the primaries for the 10th Congressional District seat and the U.S. Senate seat had the opportunity to go to the podium. Former Congressman Brad Schneider and Highland Park Mayor Nancy Rotering both spoke at some length about the upcoming primary and general election.



*Rep. Sam Yingling accepts the Ab Mikva Leadership Award.*

Senate candidate Tammy Duckworth, who currently represents the 8th Congressional District, sent regrets that she could not leave D.C. to attend the event as the House was still in session. Her primary opponents, Andrea Zopp and Napoleon Harris, spoke about their own qualifications to face Mark Kirk in November.

Upon finishing his prepared remarks, Keynote Yepsen took numerous questions from the audience. He also generously remained in the room even after the official close of the evening so that he could engage one-on-one with those who still had questions for him.

As has become a tradition, Hon. Dan Pierce gave the evening's official closing remarks, exhorting us to "get out the vote!"



*Communications Director Eric Herman accepts the Volunteer of the Year Award*



*Hon. Jack Strom and Barb Cornew*



*Carolyn Clark and Hon. Bobby Allen*



*Dulce Ortiz*

# A Personal Perspective: Who Is a Trump Supporter?

By Steven Gan

The more outrageous Donald Trump's statements become, the more his support among Republicans continues to rise. Poll after poll shows his lead over the other Republican presidential candidates widening. I continue to be baffled at how this can be.

For example, even though no television footage or contemporaneous newspaper reports have surfaced, Trump continues to insist that he saw thousands of Muslims on television rejoicing in New Jersey upon seeing the destruction of the World Trade Center Towers on 9/11. Although the assertion has been widely exposed as false, this blatant fabrication sits just fine with Trump supporters.



How can this be? I'm not a psychologist; I'm just a regular American who's trying to understand the makeup of the people who support Donald Trump as though he were the Dear Leader of North Korea whose pronouncements can never be contradicted. So here's my simple take on who Trump's supporters are.

**The Apprentice Sadists** - Donald Trump's reality TV show attracted a huge following. These viewers and fans must have gotten some kind of sadistic joy watching Trump degrade people who failed when he told them, "You're fired!" Perhaps these Trump fans don't realize that

their hero wouldn't have the power to fire anyone in Congress who didn't go along with his agenda. He couldn't fire any world leaders, either.

**Trump Wannabes** - When Donald Trump talks about how really, really rich he is, how wonderful his buildings are, and how he'll build a "beautiful wall with one big door" to control the U.S.-Mexican border, the grandiosity of his statements, the narcissism, and the egomaniacal bragging may appeal to people who wish they could be just like him. These Trump supporters may seek to bask in the glow of Trump's perceived accomplishments. Trump looks like a winner, and by joining his campaign, these supporters become winners, too.

**Bigots and Xenophobes** - When Trump called for a total ban on Muslims entering the United States, he fanned the flames of bigotry and xenophobia. There are, unfortunately, many in this country, and within the ranks of the Republican Party, who welcome brazenly discriminatory rhetoric. If they feel unsafe, if they are not succeeding economically, it's not their own fault – it's because of "those people." As Hillary Clinton observed during the Democratic Presidential Candidates Debate on December 19, this appeal to bigotry and xenophobia feeds right into the ISIS narrative that the United States is waging a war on Islam.

**People Who Can't Be Bothered with Details** - When Donald Trump says he's going to make Mexico pay \$100,000 for every undocumented immigrant "they send" to the U.S., how many of Trump's supporters wonder whether Mexico in fact is making a coordinated effort to send its citizens across the border? Do these supporters ask exactly how Trump would exact payment from Mexico? Of course not. The details are irrelevant; it's the bigness and boldness of the statements that resonates. The irony is that Trump himself probably has no idea how he would make the Mexican government pay such a fee.

It's a shameful reflection on the Republican Party that a Donald Trump can become a leading candidate for its presidential nomination by making outlandish statements and wild promises, provoking foreign governments, and promoting bigotry and xenophobia. One thing is certain: these are not American values.

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## The Trump Sandwich: A Lot of Baloney, But It's Not Very Filling

By Michael W. Beatty

The deli that I frequent for lunch recently offered the "Trump Sandwich" as a daily special

"A 'Trump Sandwich,' Mort?" I asked the counterman.

"It's a lot of bologna on a crescent roll."

"Why a crescent roll?"

"Plenty of hot air!" Mort retorted, with a big grin.

"Is it a decent-sized sandwich? I'm hungry."

"It's YUGE!"

"Okay, I'll try that "Trump Sandwich"—with plenty of mustard and mayonnaise," I said. "If I'm going to choke down that much bologna, I need something to make it palatable!"

Mort's grin got even bigger.

"Oh, we don't actually make it," he replied. "We just talk about how wonderful, how terrific, how great, what a great sandwich it'll be. But in the end, we don't give you anything you can actually sink your teeth into."

"Well, that's Trump, all over," I said, and ordered pastrami on rye.

My exchange with Mort illustrates just how empty Donald Trump's campaign for the Republican nomination for president has been so far. Apart from the racism and xenophobia that have propelled Trump to the top of the polls, the New York real estate magnate has not offered any sort of vision for how he would grow the economy, put Americans to work and help them prosper, or "Make America Great Again." Promises to build an enormous wall along the U.S.-Mexico border —and make Mexico pay for it—and deport non-U.S. citizens of Latin American descent, or exclude Muslims, do not constitute a plan of action to realize Trump's rhetoric.

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All that Donald Trump has done since announcing his candidacy has been to talk about how great he will be as president and how high his poll numbers are. There has been no substance offered, no program proposed. Trump touts his experience as a “doer” — an alleged record of achievement that is belied by his enterprises’ history of bankruptcy and financial failure—but he is resting on his laurels. He offers no cogent or compelling reason to entrust him with the management of the United States of America.

To give the devil his due, Trump possesses an awesome set of entrepreneurial skills. He has demonstrated an impressive ability to convince owners of capital to invest in the various projects that bear Trump’s name. Those are not the skills of a political administrator. They are the skills of a salesman, of an idea man, of someone who can generate enthusiasm and “buy-in.”

They are not the skills needed to negotiate with foreign heads of state and government, who have no compelling reason other than their own national self-interest to sign on to a Trump plan. They are not the skills of a commander-in-chief, charged with national defense in a time of asymmetrical war. They are not the skills of a guardian of the people’s rights as Trump has explicitly shown by his proposal to create a national database of Muslim inhabitants of this country.

Trump the salesman has demonstrated that he can “sell the sizzle.” He says many things that elicit knee-jerk reactions of cheers and approval from his like-minded audiences at campaign appearances. The rest of us, who are looking for substantive solutions in the coming presidential election campaign to the very real issues that face this country, are left dissatisfied with the lack of substance, the lack

of “heft,” in Trump’s so-called “plans.” They will be “wonderful” and “great,” Trump promises; the products of “the best minds,” “the smart, very smart, the smartest guys” he can find. Despite that, voters are left wondering what, exactly, Trump will propose to do, and how he will propose to do it.

It is there that the observer is left most puzzled by the gap between Trump’s proven record of success in convincing skeptical capitalists to buy into his building projects, and Trump’s lack of forthrightness and his paucity of detail in proposing the biggest project of his career. Trump, who has borrowed and raised literally tens of billions of dollars in capital to fund the construction of his real estate projects, would not have been able to raise the first dime of capital without detailed plans and projections of cost, revenue, and time to build. He could not have succeeded without first having worked out the legal details of title to property, conflicts of interest and ownership, and licensure. His monuments to his own name would not have gotten off the drawing board without having first consulted with architects, engineers, and builders to develop detailed plans and drawings. In short, without having done the basic homework to produce detailed plans for how his projects were to proceed, Trump would not be in position to campaign for public office.

In seeking the Republican nomination for the presidency, Trump has failed to do any of this preparatory work, much less communicate it to his audience—especially the audience that is skeptical of his fitness for the job he seeks. It is one thing to appeal to the racists and xenophobes who believe that the U.S. is a land exclusively for white Protestant Christians. To win the presidency, Trump must appeal to voters whose concerns are in areas other than racial politics. To do that, Trump must present specific, concrete proposals to address those voters’ concerns. To date, he has failed to do so.

Donald Trump is unfit for the Republican nomination for president, much less to serve as President of the United States. This is true not just because he is a racist, misogynistic xenophobe, but also because he has failed to bring to the public forum the skills that made him such an effective entrepreneur. Donald Trump’s campaign, like my deli’s “Trump Sandwich,” is a lot of bologna and hot air. The American people deserve better.

## **Why Unions Matter**

*(continued from front page)*

“It all comes down to it’s a democracy,” said Matt LaPierre, Business Agent of the Lake County Federation of Teachers Local 504.

“Workers vote to have a union, they elect their leaders, they can elect to join a bigger organization, or they can decide to form their own. A lot of workers would prefer to have somebody that knows what they’re doing come in, and so now, we have dues. A union is very similar to a public entity. Just like people are taxed, you’re taxed to pool your resources so one person isn’t burdened with covering their whole share of representation, and that’s what a union does.”

But unions are facing grave threats. Even now, Governor Bruce Rauner is holding the state budget hostage in order to force his anti-union agenda, turn Illinois into a “right to work” state, and destroy collective bargaining. Heartened by Rauner, the village of Lincolnshire has passed its own “right to work” ordinance.

“I always say if a lot of special interests spend billions and billions of dollars to suppress, to keep out, to destroy the labor movement, we must be doing something right,” said Patrick Statter, President of the

Northeastern Illinois Federation of Labor.

For starters, unions give workers the bargaining power needed to negotiate a fair contract with their employer. Illinois is an at-will state. Without a union, the employer can fire you for any reason short of outright discrimination. A union contract may not give you everything you want, but you will still be better off than if you tried to negotiate yourself.

“Who negotiates for themselves?” asks LaPierre. “You apply for a job, and you take what the boss gives you. You do it, or you walk. The employer isn’t going to allow you to have that kind of control. With a union, you have a contract. You negotiate your wages, hours, and working conditions with the boss, so the boss can’t just dictate what the deal is going to be. Some employers are enlightened, but 90 percent of employers give the rest a bad name.”

Collective bargaining allows workers to negotiate for terms they

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might not otherwise get if the employer has all the power. For example, you might be willing to accept a lower salary in exchange for better health insurance.

The union can also negotiate a contract that enables you to plan ahead.

“Let’s say you have a three-, four-, or five-year contract. You know what kind of wage increase you can expect, so you can plan your life rather than going to your boss every year with a cup of gruel in your hands and saying, ‘Please sir, can I have some more?’” said LaPierre.

Another union issue is workplace safety. Without a union, if your boss refuses to vent the exhaust fumes that are making you sick or to turn on the air conditioner or heat, you have no recourse. But most union contracts have a health and safety clause requiring the boss to maintain a safe work environment. If not, the union can enforce that clause in arbitration, said LaPierre.

La Pierre continued, “We had a situation in a building where it had flooded, and the employer came in and claimed that everything was cleaned up. But the flooring in the building was carpet, and the carpet never truly dried out. Mold was an issue, and the workers starting getting sick. We were able to get the employer to bring in an independent air quality company to test the air quality and to provide remediation services.”

A union gives workers a voice on the job as well as a legal forum and structure that both sides must stay within. Each side has recourse if the other doesn’t comply, said LaPierre. For example, you may be accused of something you didn’t do. Without a union, the employer can simply fire you. Case closed. There is no due process to protect you or to determine the facts.

“The constitution doesn’t apply to the workplace,” said LaPierre.

For example, a teacher communicates via social media with students, and the district decides this is inappropriate conduct, so it fires the teacher. The union can advocate for the teacher, ensure there is an investigation and that the teacher can face his or her accusers. Without the union, the teacher can’t do anything.

LaPierre has seen cases where a school district claims a teacher has had inappropriate contact with a student. The district refers the matter to the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS).

“The union rep can sit with you through the DCFS interview to give you support. And yes, we’ve had people exonerated, because they had the ability to tell their side of the story,” said LaPierre.

LaPierre cites another example where a long-term employee was fired from a nursing home after working in maintenance for approximately 20 years. The worker was accused of stealing towels that were essentially used as rags. At first, he was given a written warning and told just to put the rags back.

“Then, the human resources director had some sort of epiphany that stealing was bad, and she fired him. But he had a union, and the union said, ‘You can’t do that. You already administered some

disciplinary action, you can’t now increase the discipline just because you got up on the wrong side of the bed.’ It took us about a year to go through the grievance procedure and get the case before an arbitrator,” LaPierre continued. “The arbitrator agreed with us. The guy was out of work for one year. They put him back to work with full back pay, and if you didn’t have a union, what are you going to do with that?”

When a new employer takes over, the union can help protect jobs during the transition. In one case, a county ran a unionized nursing home. The county decided to privatize the nursing home. While not required to include the union contract in the deal, the county still had to negotiate with the union over the impact of turning the nursing home over to a private company.

Even non-union workers may get benefits from their union counterparts, said Statter. A non-union employer may raise wages to compete with union shops or to discourage workers from organizing on their own.

Another example is a double-breasted employer—one with both union and non-union shops. “Whatever this employer negotiates with the union, after the contract has been settled, they give the non-union workers the same thing, because they don’t want them to organize,” Statter explained. “So the company says you don’t have to unionize. We’ll give you whatever they get, and you don’t have to pay union dues.”

On the political front, unions lobby for laws that help all workers. For example, because of the push to increase the minimum wage in Chicago to \$10, Walmart raised its wages a couple months beforehand, said Statter.

And unions can have a positive side for employers.

“One of the things that unions can be very, very good at is providing strategic assistance and advice to the boss. In a lot of places, the boss doesn’t have a clue how to run his company. The workers are delivering the services, and they know what works and what doesn’t. The union provides the forum to keep the company afloat. If the boss is making a bad decision, the workers are going to be the first ones to know about it. The workers have a stake in their employment,” said LaPierre.

Unions benefit the greater community, said Statter. They participate in food drives and partner with organizations that assist victims of natural disasters, such as the tornado that struck Washington, Illinois. Union members were on the front lines of 9/11, and many of them were killed.

Unions give workers a sense of security through negotiated benefits and through a sense of belonging.

“Organized labor has maintained the middle class. It helps people from the underclasses achieve the middle class, and sometimes people in the middle class go on and become the upper class,” said Statter.

Unions level the playing field between workers and employers. And that makes for a winning game for everyone.