



The Western Kentucky Worker

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Prepared by Berry Craig, AFT Local 1360 and KEA-NEA
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Delaney, Spann, Steele and Williams are Young Award nominees

The council executive board is expected to choose the 2011 W.C. Young Award recipient from among four candidates when the panel meets before Thursday's regular council meeting.

The nominees are Bob Delaney, Ron Spann, Donna Steele and Hardy Williams. Delaney, who is retired, is a former directing business representative for Machinists District Lodge 154. Spann is a retired Steelworkers District 8 staff representative. Steele is president of USW Local 550. Williams is a retired Machinist, council trustee and former council recording secretary.

"As always, we have an excellent group of nominees," Wiggins said. "The E-board will again have a tough choice."

The W.C. Young Award is the highest honor the council bestows. It is named for the late W.C. Young, a national union and civil rights activist from Paducah. In 1994, he was presented with the first award. Last year's recipient was Howard Walker, a former sheriff and longtime member of Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 184.

The awards are presented at an annual W.C. Young Dinner. At Thursday's meeting, the council is expected to set the date for the dinner.

Area Council delegates thank Draffen and MSU student groups



Jeff Wiggins, West KY AFL-CIO Council President

The council was in a grateful mood at its April meeting. Delegates passed resolutions thanking Carla Draffen and the Students for Progress and the College Democrats at Murray State University.

Draffen is the council's webmaster. "Carla has done a wonderful job for us all of these years," said Council President Jeff Wiggins. "She has provided us one of the best-looking labor web sites out there."

Draffen is a professor at West Kentucky Community and Technical College in Paducah and a member of AFT Local 1360.

The council thanked the two student groups for putting on a "We Are One – National Day of Action and Solidarity" program on campus April 4. "It was wonderful what those young people did," Wiggins said. "I felt honored when they asked me to speak."

The council unanimously passed both resolutions.

At the Solidarity Day program, Wiggins brought a message for Kentucky Republicans who want to push anti-union bills in the Bluegrass State.

"We know what the Republicans are doing to us in other states. We don't want Wisconsin here in Kentucky. We don't want Ohio and Indiana here in Kentucky. We like our people making \$5,000 a year more than people make in right to work states."

Wiggins, a Steelworker and president of the Paducah-based Western Kentucky Area Council, AFL-CIO, was a featured speaker at the "We Are One -- National Day of Action and Solidarity" program at Murray State University April 4.

The event attracted about 50 students, faculty, union members and others to the student center.

The program was one of thousands of "We Are One" observances that were held nationwide on the 43rd anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis. The civil rights leader had gone to Memphis to support striking city sanitation workers who belonged to the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees union.

Other invited speakers included Wayne Chambers, the last vice president of Steelworkers Local 665 at the old Continental-General Tire Plant near Mayfield, and Dr. David Pizzo, a history professor.

In addition, UAW retirees Jerry Sykes and Jay Latham made impromptu remarks.

Wiggins, who is also president of Steelworkers Local 9447-4 in Calvert City, said voters need to re-elect Gov. Steve Beshear to help prevent Kentucky from becoming a right to work state.

Beshear is a Democrat. The Kentucky State AFL-CIO recently endorsed him for a second term.

"Every one of those candidates for governor on the other side wants to make Kentucky a right to work state," Wiggins said.

Unions say right to work laws, which are backed by conservative, anti-union groups, are unfair because they enable workers to enjoy union-won wages and benefits without paying union dues.

The average paycheck of a worker in a right to work state is \$5,333 a year less than in non-right to work states, according to statistics published by the non-partisan federal Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Chambers worked at the big tire plant for 38 years. Opened by the General Tire and Rubber Co., an American firm, the factory was eventually bought out by Continental Tire, a multinational corporation headquartered in Germany.

Chambers said Continental officials told union workers it wasn't their fault the plant was shutting down.

"They said to us 'You're doing your job. You have met every goal that we put in front of you, but we can build tires cheaper somewhere else.'"

He said Continental moved Mayfield production to tire factories in Mexico and Brazil.

"These companies like Continental are closing union plants in the United States and moving them to low wage countries where there are no environmental protection laws, no workers' comp laws and where you can just dump chemicals behind the plant."

Added Chambers: "But that's not the end of the story. After they stopped tire production at our plant, I saw an ad for a Paducah tire store that sold several brands of tires. Size for size, Continentals were the most expensive tires. It's the greed of these big companies that is destroying the middle class."

After the plant closed, it was demolished. "There were 55 acres under one roof," Chambers said. "Now it's just a concrete slab."

Following remarks by Pizzo, Chambers and Wiggins, the crowd sang traditional union songs and the program shifted to a panel discussion hosted by Matt Hall, president of the Students for Progress; Kyle Shupe, president of the College Democrats; and Devin Griggs, College Democrats publicity chair. Wiggins and Pizzo fielded questions from the audience.

The rally concluded with a special showing of the Michael Moore film *Capitalism: A Love Story*.

A thunderstorm and tumbling temperatures forced the rally indoors and held down the crowd size, Hall said. Plans called for a march across campus.

Henderson hosts fundraiser for Beshear-Abramson ticket

Kyle Henderson, right, business manager for Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 184, recently hosted a fund raiser for Gov. Steve Beshear and his running mate, former Louisville mayor Jerry Abramson, left, at the Little Castle restaurant in Lone Oak.

"We raised a pretty good amount of money for a small fund raiser that was sort of spur-of-the-moment," Henderson said.

The Kentucky State AFL-CIO has endorsed the Beshear-Abramson ticket.

The two Democrats are expected to face the David Williams-Richie Farmer Republican ticket in the fall.

Williams is president of the state senate. Farmer is agriculture commissioner.



Jerry Abramson, left, Louisville, KY mayor, and Kyle Henderson, right, business manager for Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 184.

“Williams is another Scott Walker,” said Jeff Wiggins, council president. “He would bring Wisconsin-style union busting to Kentucky.”

Wiggins added: “Richie Farmer was a great basketball player. But he hasn’t done anything as agriculture commissioner except make his name larger on those stickers on gas pumps. He’s a union-hater like Williams.”

Minutes of the April 7, 2011 Council Meeting **Prepared by Berry Craig, council recording secretary**

President Jeff Wiggins gavelled the Executive Board meeting to order at 6 p.m.

Howard “Bubba” Dawes, COPE chair, reviewed the state AFL-CIO endorsements: Steve Beshear (governor), Jerry Abramson, (lieutenant governor), Jack Conway (attorney general), Todd Hollenbach (state treasurer) and Adam Edelen (state auditor).

Wiggins reviewed legislative action, saying that David Mast hurt the cause of the nuclear bill. Delegate Jim Key suggested a meeting with local House members before the next legislative session.

Brandon Duncan, Labor Day Committee president; and David Burnett, committee recording secretary; reported on the Labor Day program. The theme is “Past, Present and Future Together With Solidarity.” Fund-raising letters have been sent and there is enough money for a parade and picnic on Labor Day. But Sunday activities are possible. Duncan and Burnett said the parade may be turned around and run toward the riverfront. Wiggins complimented the Labor Day committee for their hard work on the 2011 program.

Benny Adair, president of the Jackson House-Sanders Retirement Center Board of Directors, announced the approval of the \$1 million grant to renovate two existing elevators and add a combination passenger-freight elevator at the Jackson House. He said he met with state officials from Frankfort. Adair added that Gov. Beshear will be coming and participate in a ceremony with Mayor Bill Paxton.

In other business, the Executive Board:

- Approved the hiring of Tony Crowe to mow the council lawn.
- Approved reimbursing Wiggins for money he spent on a new printer drum
- Wiggins said he bought a new Kentucky state flag for the council flagpole.
- Wiggins announced he sent Trustee Bo Johnson to the AFL-CIO Southern Regional Conference in Nashville. He said AFSCME, Johnson’s union, would pay for the trip.

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

President Wiggins gavelled the regular meeting to order at 7 p.m. After the customary pledge of allegiance and prayer, Financial Secretary-Treasurer Duncan gave the financial report and Wiggins reviewed the correspondence.

Four people have been nominated for the W.C. Young Award: Bob Delaney, Donna Steele, Ron Spann and Hardy Williams. The Executive Board is to choose the recipient at its May meeting.

In other business, the council:

- Approved the hiring of Crowe and the reimbursement of Wiggins
- Approved a resolution of thanks to the Murray State students who put on the Solidarity Day program on April 4
- Approved a resolution of thanks to WKCTC Professor Carla Draffen for maintaining the council website
- Set the annual Workers Memorial Day program for 6 p.m. April 26. (Delegates were invited to attend a Labor Day Committee meeting at 5 p.m. on April 26.)
- Watched the AFL-CIO “We are One” video.

The attempt to crush public worker unions

By IRA GRUPPER

EDITOR’S NOTE: This is Grupper’s regular “Labor Paeans” column from the current issue of FORsooth, newspaper of Louisville, Kentucky chapter of FOR (Fellowship of Reconciliation).

In the Great Depression of the 1930’s there were countless people selling apples on the streets to survive, and there were population shifts as workers hustled to try to find work. The poor were getting poorer, and there was the hint of a permanent underclass. And, yes, the rich were getting richer.

Since then the profit system has learned to hide some of its disfigurements. We used to view reports from Vietnam, several decades ago, by journalists like Peter Arnett (CNN), and that helped the American people see the horror of our destruction of a largely unarmed people. But today—today reporters are “imbedded,” meaning they sit in a tank, see only the inside, and then regurgitate the U.S. military propaganda. Nor do we see people selling apples in the streets.

And then there is the shopping mall. Sbarro, the fast-food pizza chain begun as a simple grocery store in the 1950’s, is now feeling the effect of a growing unemployment in the U.S. It has filed for bankruptcy. In fairness, there are more online shoppers, so mall traffic has slowed. But really, it’s the recession. The Wall Street Journal reports the company lost about \$29.3 million during the first nine months of last year. Arrivederci, Sbarro.

How do we who sell our labor power for a wage brace ourselves for the whiplash of corporate greed? We form unions—in the private sector, and in the public sector.

Come now the Republican corporate shills, governors and legislators in Wisconsin, Indiana and Ohio, and now many more states. They introduce bills to destroy public sector collective bargaining, and workers are again victimized. As Truthout reports: “We have seen this shameless suppression of workers before:

when the US Army seized coal mines to bust up a post-World-War II miner strike; when Reagan fired 12,000 PATCO workers, simply for striking; when the second Bush stuffed the 'Labor Department' full of corporate cronies and spent his first days in office tossing vital workplace regulations in the trash."

The fightback

This evening (April 4), here in Louisville, 125 workers and some government officials came out in the pouring rain to a "block party for public workers". Many unions were represented.

Wanda Mitchell Smith (AFSCME—Amer. Federation of State, County & Municipal Workers) spoke eloquently: "When Dr. King went to Memphis (in 1968) he left from Zion Baptist Church here in Louisville (where his brother was pastor)...(This) is a time to be creative. We are one."

Tia Edison, a (union) teacher at Knight Middle School here in Louisville, and a former member of the UAW, let us know that "they want to blame all the teachers (for failing schools)...No Child Left Behind (law) is a farce."

"Come and go with me to that land" was sung with gusto. Originally a civil rights movement song, it now is put into a labor framework.

Organized labor, for too long dormant, is on the move. But we must never forget, and I know some labor leaders who read this column will get mad at me, that it was poor and working people who put the Republican governors and state representatives in office in Wisconsin, Indiana and Ohio. Where were the organized education efforts to explain to these workers that if you sleep with a corporate prostitute you are liable to get the economic clap? Well, labor is now awake.

Under international law, claims Amnesty International, all workers have a human right to organize and to bargain collectively. "These rights...are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, as well as conventions adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

"As a state party to the ICCPR and a signatory to the ICESCR, the USA has an obligation to respect the human rights under these instruments and treaties."

Part of our fightback must include support for the The Full Employment & Training Act (H.R. 870), recently introduced by Congressman John Conyers. "(It) can counteract massive unemployment and speculative profiteering that keeps widening the gap between the rich and the rest of us.

"The law would make the Wall Street speculators behind the economic disaster pony up to create jobs: whether teaching children, making homes energy efficient, caring for the sick or rebuilding neighborhoods." (Paul Krugman, New York Times, March 18, 2011).

Speaking of columnists, nationally known corporate shill, David Broder, recently died. Reports FAIR (Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting): “Despite (his) non-ideological reputation, he pushed political culture to the right...The notion that Broder's moderate ‘centrism’ was not an ideology in itself is a common view...and is totally mistaken. Broder expressed a strong point of view on a range of issues. The fact that such views are portrayed as an absence of ideology speaks volumes about the prevailing ideology of the mainstream media.”

Which brings us back to Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., assassinated on April 4, 1968 while rallying garbage workers on strike in Memphis, Tennessee. They were fighting for dignity and a living wage. Four decades later, workers in Wisconsin, Ohio and Indiana are fighting for dignity and a living wage. Who will be remembered in history: the greedy or the needy? It is in our hands.

Grupper, a member of the Kentucky Labor Institute Board of Directors, can be contacted at irag@iglou.com.

Teens perform a special "On, Wisconsin!" for Dairy State unions By BERRY CRAIG

The union movement has a rich musical heritage.

So when the area council decided to do something unique to show solidarity with our Wisconsin union brothers and sisters, I proposed a special rendition of “On, Wisconsin!”

The performance is on YouTube. It can be viewed via the council’s website: <http://www.ky.aflcio.org/wkvaflcio/>. The video is on the homepage close to the bottom. (Or click on this link to go directly to the YouTube video: [A Special "On, Wisconsin!" for Dairy State Unions](#))

Though I had fun writing the lyrics, I sing poorly and cannot play any musical instrument. But I knew where to find top flight performers.

One lives in our house. The other is a frequent and welcome visitor.

Lee Scarbrough sings our special “On, Wisconsin!” while Berry Craig IV accompanies him on the trumpet. Lee and Berry are seniors at Mayfield High School and standouts in the Cardinal marching band. They have been buddies since kindergarten.

Lee is a Governor’s School for the Arts alumni. Berry was in the 2010 Governor’s Scholars program and made the 2010 all-state band.

Berry and Lee are veterans of all-district and Quad State performances at Murray State University, where they will enroll in the fall – both having earned music scholarships. They will march in the Murray State band.

**THE AREA COUNCIL STANDS IN
SOLIDARITY WITH OUR UNION BROTHERS
AND SISTERS OF USW LOCAL 7-669**



Workers Memorial Day observed at council hall

Brandon Duncan, council financial secretary-treasurer, right, officiated at the annual Workers Memorial Day observance at the council hall on April 26.

The program also featured remarks by Berry Craig, council recording secretary.

The unions of the AFL-CIO observe Workers Memorial Day on April 28. But because of a scheduling conflict, the council held this year's observance on April 26.

After Craig's remarks, Duncan read the names of 10 western Kentuckians who were among 109 men and women from across the state listed as work-related fatalities in 2010.



Brandon Duncan, council financial secretary-treasurer

Happy Birthday, Bill Hack!

Longtime area union leader Bill Hack blows out a candle on his birthday cake at a special surprise party Saturday at Grace Baptist Church on Bloom Avenue. Hack is 90.

Several well-wishers, including a number of his union brothers and sisters, dropped by the church. Hack retired as business agent for Ironworkers Local 782. He also is a recipient of the W.C. Young Award, the highest honor the council bestows. Hack was a longtime council delegate.

In addition, he is a World War II veteran, flying combat missions over Europe as a B-17 gunner. He was shot down in 1943 and, after the war, came home to Paducah with a Distinguished

Flying Cross, a Purple Heart, a Presidential Unit Citation and other decorations.

Gov. Steve Beshear and former Gov. Paul Patton sent Hack birthday wishes via letters.



Bill Hack, longtime area union leader, blowing out the candles on the cake for his 90th birthday. (Photo by CATHY HAYDEN)

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