

## NATIONAL BOARD MEETING

2014 Elections - last 70 days

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This report is to prepare for the National Committee meeting where we will have time for districts and clubs to discuss their work

At the National Committee meeting the report should open with the basis for our electoral policy to defeat the extreme right and build a broad labor - people's alliance.

This meeting will take up - where the elections are at, who is engaged, what the entire Party should be focused on for the next 70 days.

The importance of these elections are understood more deeply in light of developments in Ferguson, Missouri where a majority African American town has hardly any African American representation in city government or police. The situation has sparked a national movement.

These mid-term elections represent a high stakes battle for the future of the country. Democratic and class struggles are joined together. The issues remain what is the role of government and obstructions to disallow the Obama administration to govern. The fight to raise the minimum wage, the struggle to end racial profiling and deportations, to address climate change are all a part. And especially the very right to vote itself, the essence of democracy.

Opinion polls continue to show a progressive shift in attitudes, going in the opposite direction of the anti-union, anti-worker, racist and militarist agenda of the Koch brothers et al. Local support for independent electoral forms such as the Vermont Progressive Party and Working Families Party is growing. As well, the demographics in the country continue to shift more diverse, younger and more progressive.

The Koch brothers and the extremists on the right-wing are in a vicious frenzy to suppress the vote and to destroy unions state by state, and the Obama presidency nationally, and be in place for the 2016 presidential election.

The Koch brothers alone are investing \$500 million dollars to take control of the Senate by gaining six seats for the Republicans. They are spending additional millions to stop any Democratic pickups in the House, and to hold onto the 10 Governorships they picked up in 2010 at the time of the last mid term elections.

This week the Tea Party held "Impeach Obama Week," rallies coast-to-coast attempting to whip up a hysterical atmosphere similar to the tactics in 2010 at health care town hall meetings.

Sen. Mitch McConnell has said outright that if he gets control of the Senate, he will move to repeal the Affordable Care Act, oppose the raise in the minimum wage, bring the government to a shutdown over the budget, and push for new restrictions on women's reproductive rights. As he said: "If I was majority leader, we'd already have had a vote on it in the Senate."

There are allies of the labor and people's movement in the Senate. One of them, Elizabeth Warren, just sent out a letter explaining why she is crisscrossing the country right now. She says:

"It's already hard enough to get real reform done in Washington, but as long as we control the Senate, we can stay on offense. And most importantly, we're in a much better position to fight for what we believe in.

- ⬆ To fight for raising the minimum wage, so no one who works full-time lives in poverty.
- ⬆ To fight for strengthening Social Security, so people can retire with dignity after a lifetime of work.
- ⬆ To fight for our kids to have a chance to go to college without getting crushed by debt.
- ⬆ To fight for equal pay for equal work and access to birth control.
- ⬆ And to fight for stronger rules and tougher enforcement on Wall Street, so we can start to level the playing field for America's middle class.

I'm fighting for this and a whole lot more – but the truth is, it would become much more difficult to get anything done if we lose control of the Senate two months from now."

Rep. Raul Grijalva and Rep. Keith Ellison, chairs of the Congressional Progressive Caucus in the House have spoken similarly.

The point is clear that the ability to go onto the offensive is at stake in these elections. Some pundits want us to believe that the Republican takeover of the Senate and continued control of Governor seats is a done deal. But that is far from the reality.

In fact right now, most of the battleground races are too close to call, either tossups or just a few points difference. The decider will be voter turnout. The decider will be overcoming divisive and racist personal attack ads flooding the airwaves and social media more and more to election day.

There is some amazing organizing underway to prevent further extreme right-wing advances. The labor and people's alliance that we consider of strategic importance is moving forward in many places. The top challenge to unity is taking on the key lever of racism used to confuse and divide working class people.

This includes the "deep red" South: The Paint the South Blue campaign is aiming to transform the political landscape in the south and the nation. In Kentucky there is a chance to defeat Mitch McConnell. In Georgia, Texas, South Carolina and Florida there is a chance to elect Democratic Governors.

The battlegrounds include the mid west. In Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania there is the chance to defeat tea party Republican governors with labor leading the effort to end the slaughter of working peoples' rights.

Labor 2014, is going into full swing this Labor Day weekend in many states, focused on the battleground states for Governors but including the U.S. Senate and House. The lessons and message from the travesty in Wisconsin in 2010 with the election of Gov Scott Walker and the destruction of collective bargaining for public workers will be shared as part of labor walks and phone banks and workplace discussion.

The extraordinary Moral Monday movement in North Carolina expanded to 12 states for the Moral Week of Action which concluded today. The issues of labor rights, youth, racial profiling, the environment, health care were turned that into a giant voter registration and mobilization effort that is ongoing.

Different groupings are focused on different races.

USAction is organizing for the Senate seats in Iowa, Colorado and Michigan which they consider key to who will control that body.

The League of Conservation Voters is mobilizing to "stop the climate change denier takeover in the Senate" with a focus on Iowa, Colorado and North Carolina.

MoveOn is kicking off Save the Senate house parties and phone banks in September. Democrats for America started DFA Dialer today also making calls into battleground Senate states from around the country.

A Native American group has proposed adapting the icebucket challenge to a challenge to vote, using twitter, face book and other social media.

There are calls to carry out massive voter registration in honor of Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin and the civil rights workers who were murdered 60 years ago. The political balance of forces after election day will determine to what extent the Unity Call proposals for national oversight of police conduct coming out of the Ferguson experience can be legislated.

The When Women Succeed America Succeeds campaign is mobilizing women on the economic and social issues. Youth and students are mobilizing around the issues of student debt.

There is great pressure on President Obama to act on stopping deportations which is being watched closely in the Latino community. A recent poll by Pew Research Center shows increasing support for immigration reform among the general public. "49% in February of this year said that it was important to pass some sort of significant legislation, but now in July 2014 we find this number up to 61%."

In short, there are many ways to connect and participate in this election with the goal of getting out the vote and continuing to build momentum for a labor-people's program.

### **Putting the entire Party into motion**

The Political Action Commission has developed some proposals for how our Party can make its full weight felt nationally and locally within the next 70 days in the Governor, Senate, House and other races keeping in mind the questions: How to do this in a way that continues and strengthens the struggle and our Party at the grassroots beyond the election? What can every commission, club, member and leadership body do to carry out this focus?

Therefore, a district survey was sent out to discover where we are in a position to impact on the strategic battleground races, and where we are in a position to impact on all other races as well. With a few exceptions, the surveys have been received indicating races that are prioritized for participation. Four U.S. Senate races and nine Governor races (including the Labor 2014 top races) are considered either toss ups or almost so, although this is a changing assessment as the campaigns unfold. Should there be special assistance to these states? In what way?

### **Other proposals**

1. We have had some excellent coverage in the People's World. How can we all work systematically to guarantee continued coverage from the ground in the battleground states and to circulate those articles widely within those states but also nationally to create an atmosphere of urgency, excitement and

fightback?

2. In some places, the Party has been engaged in voter registration over the summer. How can we increase voter registration in the wards or districts where the local Party is working: to discuss issues, convince people of the importance of collective action and voting being an important part of collective action, and making relationships that can last for other organizing efforts? A great example is the Moral Week of Action voter registration dedicated in honor of Michael Brown.

3. There were various requests for literature in the survey responses. These would be designed and available electronically for distribution on social media and also for local print out.

One was a comparison of what it means for working people if the Republicans or Democrats have control of the Senate and the House. We prepared something similar as a quarter size card in 2008 which was popular and was taken and printed by other organizations with their own logo. It shows who would be the committee chairs and what their AFL-CIO voting record is. At a glance it is obvious that Republican control will place working people completely on the defensive.

Another idea is to create a series of short, small flyers on why vote related to different issues. Climate Change - Why Vote? Raise the Minimum Wage - Why Vote? Jobs for Youth Jobs for All - Why Vote? End Racial Profiling - Why Vote? Women's Reproductive Rights - Why Vote? Student Loans - Why Vote? Immigration Reform - Why Vote? They have not been drafted yet, but perhaps there are some comrades who would like to work on that.

Another idea that came from the surveys was one or more teleconferences or google hangouts. We thought it would be good if the Party could arrange for a google hangout with John Bachtell on his article in Political Affairs, "Elections, the State, Reform and Revolution." We had also thought of a teleconference with district and club leaders, but perhaps more important is to prepare for the national committee meeting and ask for local reports at that time.

4. There is so much going on now. The response to Ferguson, the Climate March, and the next fast food strike are a few. How can our national leadership provide the lead and the resources to integrate voter registration, education on the stakes in this election and the issues, and voter turnout into every other mobilization taking place in September and October? What ideas for clubs or districts? For example holding a meeting with guests to discuss how the elections relate and then organizing to participate in a Labor walk or other canvassing or phoning efforts.

5. While the main way to share what is developing is through People's World articles, there is the possibility of a weekly action update highlighting examples, and ideas for the elections if that will be useful to mobilize the entire Party. The Political Action Commission produced something like this in 2010 and 2012. Perhaps there are other suggestions.

It is possible for the labor and people's alliance to make some strategic gains and to defend important positions despite the difficulties of being a mid-term election. The challenge is going to be voter turnout in these key races, and in every race.

These are some ideas about how each and every one of us and our collectives can arise to the occasion in the next 70 days and contribute toward possible victories in ways that allow us to come out of the next two intensive months with more friends and more members and better prepared for the ongoing struggle ahead. Let's decide which are most effective and most practical without delay.

