

United Faculty and Academic Staff (UFAS) is a labor union democratically organized to represent its members—faculty and academic staff at both the UW-Madison and UW-Extension. UFAS is an independent affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, Local #223, AFL-CIO.

Hell No, We Won't Go! Defend Wisconsin – Join the Union!

By Anna Paretskaya,
 Lecturer in Sociology;
 and Chad Alan
 Goldberg, UFAS Vice
 President, Associate
 Professor of Sociology

While the bill stripping public employees of our collective bargaining rights has been passed and signed into law, we are not going gentle into that good night as Governor Scott Walker imagined when he introduced his so-called “budget repair” bill in early February. The labor movement, along with the state’s Democratic Party and other progressive and grass-roots groups, are putting up an impressive fight that delayed the passage of the bill by three weeks, providing much-needed time to educate and mobilize the public against it. Members of UFAS (United Faculty & Academic Staff), a small but active component of this broad opposition movement, were on the frontlines from day one fighting to stop devastating cuts to higher education and other essential services, preserve collective bargaining for university employees and other public employees, and oppose the redistribution of power and resources from Wisconsin’s working families

to corporations and wealthy individuals.

There probably isn’t a UFAS member who since February 14 hasn’t contacted their state legislator about SR-11, the governor’s “budget repair” bill, or hasn’t been to a rally at the State Capitol. Seems that those “I support collective bargaining rights for faculty and staff” signs were brought out of retirement—they have been spotted on many occasions in and around the Capitol. But there have been many more ways in which UFAS members contributed to the resistance to the bill.

During the first week of the bill’s debate in the legislature, UFAS members were among the hundreds who lobbied lawmakers and testified before the joint finance committee. On February 17, UFAS president Jim Molenda spoke to the staffs of several Assembly representatives. VP Chad Goldberg appeared in front of the committee on the first night of hearings where he emphasized that “preservation of our collective bargaining rights is a matter of basic fairness... [C]ollective bargaining rights mean a more democratic university insofar as they strengthen shared governance, give academic staff and faculty a real voice,

and provide needed checks and balances to ensure public accountability; and ... collective bargaining rights mean a better quality education insofar as our working conditions are UW students’ learning conditions.” UFAS endorsed the February 17 teach-out organized by our sister union TAA (Teaching Assistants’ Association) and other student groups, and Jim and Chad sent open letters to Chancellor Martin and UW-

Madison department heads urging them to show leniency and flexibility to students and graduate employees who were unable to fulfill their regular obligations due to protests at the Capitol. UFAS members, including Will Jones and Tony Michels, were instrumental in putting together and securing wide support for letters in opposition to SR-11 from various departments and divisions of UW-Madison
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UFAS Forums

If you’d like to know more about UFAS, meet its members, and learn how you can get involved in our fight to defend Wisconsin, join us for two events in April.

When:

April 12, 2011, 12:00 to 1:00 PM
 April 28, 2011, 5:00 to 6:00 PM

Where:

Wisconsin Student Union; check UW online calendar and/or TITU for room assignment

On the Agenda:

- UFAS general info
- What UFAS can do for you, what you can do for UFAS, and what we can do together to defend Wisconsin
- New Badger Partnership/New Wisconsin Idea Partnership
- Protecting higher education in the face of deep budget cuts

Snacks and beverages will be served

Join the Union

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and UW-Extension.

When it became clear that the struggle would require a constant opposition presence in the Capitol building (pioneered and organized by TAA and several undergraduate-student groups), UFAS members donated money, food, sleeping gear, and other supplies to make this presence viable, lasting, and as comfortable as possible. Several of us even slept over in solidarity, some for just one night, others, like Karen Tuerk, for half a dozen (two of which were after the lockdown of the building on February 27). You can find Joe Elder’s account of the night of February 24 (which was “sponsored” by AFT-Wisconsin, with which UFAS is affiliated, and was the night when the Assembly passed the bill) on page 3. Several other fellow UFAS-ers were in the building that night too, including Satya Rhodes-Conway. Satya says: “By the time the vote [in the Assembly] was taken, I was curled up in my sleeping bag in the first floor rotunda, listening to the audio from Wisconsin Eye. The vote

took most people in the rotunda by surprise...It was very quick and very dramatic. Once people figured out what happened, the mood got very tense, and only shifted back once the Democrats came out to show support and everyone started chanting “Thank you, thank you.”

The huge rallies that kept growing every weekend and breaking all previous attendance records were a remarkable show of organization, solidarity, and dedication on the part of working folks coming from all corners of Wisconsin and many other states. These peaceful, albeit boisterous, protests were marshaled by hundreds of volunteers, including Jim Molenda, Karen Tuerk, and Patricia Keely. Karen was interviewed for a *USA Today* article, while Patricia, who marshaled at the Wisconsin Wave Rally on March 5, got to shake Michael Moore’s hand. Patricia volunteered because she was “shocked and saddened by the assault on public schools and teachers, the assault on women’s health and Badgercare, the assault on the working poor, and the assault on the environment—all to line

the pockets of a few wealthy [people].”

Union members, including UFAS-ers, made thousands of phone calls to fellow unionists and other Wisconsinites to rally the troops for these massive demonstrations, put pressure on legislators, and organize recalls of several Republican senators. Beth Harper has spent many days phone-banking (and also canvassing) and wrote a beautiful and instructive account of her experiences (see page 3). During spring break, several UFAS members participated in “road trips for democracy,” carpooling to canvass for the recall of Republican senators.

Since UFAS members are educators by calling and occupation, many of our anti-“budget repair” bill activities were centered on understanding, debating, and explaining the origins and implications of the bill to our colleagues, students, and the public. Many of the local teach-ins featured members of our union: Jane Collins, Laura Dresser, Frank Emspak, Don Taylor, Will Jones and others staffed at least half a dozen jam-packed forums on various

aspects of the current labor struggle. Others reported and commented on the events in Wisconsin for the media. Past UFAS president Frank Emspak appeared twice on Amy Goodman’s *Democracy Now!* and Karen Tuerk was on MSNBC’s *Last Call with Lawrence O’Donnell* to face-off with Republican state senator Glenn Grothman. Chad Goldberg and Anna Paretskaya published their accounts of the bill’s protests on the blog *Deliberately Considered* (www.deliberatelyconsidered.com). Will Jones and Stephen Kantrowitz have written op-eds for the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, Will was also interviewed for an article in *The Cap Times*, as was Joel Rogers for *Isthmus*.

For the past month, UFAS members, like other unionists and progressives in Wisconsin and around the country, have been busy opposing the attacks on our civil rights, education, and working people. **If you want to be part of this struggle, then join your colleagues, join our union—the membership card is on the back of this newsletter!**

UFAS Leadership

Jim Molenda.....	President.....	molendajim@gmail.com
Chad Goldberg.....	Vice President.....	cgoldber@gmail.com
Michelle Bright.....	Treasurer.....	mvbright@gmail.com
Alec Widorski.....	Secretary.....	alwidorski@admissions.wisc.edu
David Nack.....	Grievance Committee Chair.....	david.nack@uwex.uwc.edu
Armando Ibarra.....	Organizing Coordinator.....	mandos.ibarra@gmail.com
Anna Paretskaya.....	Newsletter Editor.....	anya.paretskaya@gmail.com

For additional information, please visit the UFAS website at <http://wi.aft.org/ufas/>
 For additional information on higher education organizing, visit www.aftwhighered.org.

On the Benefits of Phone-Banking and Canvassing

By Beth Harper, Senior Academic Librarian, Memorial Library

I've been phone-banking with the Teaching Assistants' Association (TAA) since February 16th. Mostly I have been calling union households in districts where we thought we might be able to swing the Republican senator's vote. When calling these swing districts, we were trying to find out if the person opposed the "budget repair" bill; if they did, ask to tell their senator of their opposition (and we gave them contact info); and inform them about pro-labor events in their community.

Why do I phone-bank?

To kill this bill, we needed three Republican senators to vote no. I love the rallies, the actions, the marches; I think they accomplish a lot. But what sways legislators is hearing from their constituents, not all of whom are on Facebook or use email regularly. They often live in communities with only a weekly local newspaper, or none at all. As we call people in these districts, we're providing them with information, and with moral support.

Not enough people phone-bank. It's certainly not my idea of fun. But it's worthwhile. It will toughen your skin. In an hour of calling, you'll likely get yelled at once or twice, and cut off once or twice. (Don't take it personally—they're mad

at the idea; not you.) You'll talk to one or two people on the fence. You'll get thanked four or five times, and, more than anything, you'll leave messages for people. You'll learn about a Wisconsin community you may never have heard of before.

You don't have to have all the answers. You can say "I don't know." You can tell someone why you oppose the bill. Sometimes, the person on the other end of the line doesn't want answers—they want to vent, or talk something through. Sometimes you can suggest something

they haven't thought about before: Believe it or not, one woman was surprised when I suggested one way we could solve our budget problems was to have corporations pay more taxes. She thought that was a good idea.

I recommend that you first phone-bank at one of the "rapid response centers" (the TAA office, the Madison Labor Temple, or the AFT Madison office). You'll get a script, which you should modify to fit your own voice. You can ask questions of other volunteers, listen in on them (and "borrow" some of the phrases that appeal

to you), and find out how to pronounce unfamiliar Wisconsin place names (it's "Rippin'" as in "a rippin' yarn," not "riPON" as I heard one volunteer say). You can commiserate with other callers about negative responses, and celebrate positive ones.

It takes more time, but if you have an opportunity, I'd also strongly recommend an afternoon of canvassing. I canvassed in Richland Center on February 13 with a group from the TAA and AFSME Local 171. It was a warm and sunny day, and

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A Night at the Capitol

By Joe Elder, Professor of Sociology, Languages and Cultures of Asia, and Integrated Liberal Studies

I entered the state capitol building around ten o'clock Thursday night, February 24, during the second week of struggle against the "budget-repair" bill. I had brought my sleeping bag in case I was going to spend the night there (it was an AFT-sponsored sleepover). The capitol was filled with many cheerful people, lots of signs, and continuous chants of "kill the bill." While looking for the meeting point, I

ran into several colleagues and fellow UFAS members. We were urged to go sit in the gallery of the Assembly Room. We left our bags in the hallway and passed through a security check. The gallery was crowded and the atmosphere there was tense.

Below us in the Assembly Room the Democrats were easy to identify in their trademark orange T-shirts. The Assembly was still debating the bill although the Republicans had been trying to close the discussion. All Democratic speakers, in one way or another, were arguing that Governor Walker was not telling the truth when he said that he needed to break unions in order to

balance the budget: the unions had already agreed to absorb most of the cuts the bill demanded. Each Democrat also pointed out that a number of items in "the non-negotiating bill" (such as stopping collecting union dues and requiring annual re-certification of unions) raised zero funds to balance the budget and were essentially aimed at destroying unions. Each Democrat also praised the fourteen State senators whose departure from Wisconsin had prevented "the bill" from being quietly passed into legislation. If Governor Walker had hoped to

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Phone-Banking

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we were asking residents to sign pre-printed postcards in opposition to the “budget repair” bill. When you canvass, you’ll get a map and list of addresses for union households, and you’ll get a “rap,” or script. You can go out with a partner. You’ll probably have to figure out a route yourself, so it’s an opportunity to test or improve your navigational skills!

The drive to Richland Center was beautiful, even in February. The highways wind through valleys, with farms so picturesque they scream “This is the dairy state!” I met cool people carpooling to and from Richland Center, and we had great discussions in the car. Since then, I’ve run into everyone in my carpool at least once at a pro-labor event; they’re now familiar faces to me. Walking the streets of Richland Center, I certainly learned about the geography of the town, and a tiny bit about its economy and politics—the things I wouldn’t have learned any other way.

At many homes, no one was in. We did meet some people who supported the bill, or who weren’t interested in the issue. We had great conversations with the people who did want to sign the postcards (and of the people we talked to, most opposed the bill). My favorite encounter was with a wife of a county worker. As she signed the postcard, she urged

us to talk to her neighbor. She said they’d just been talking about this at dinner the previous night. So we did catch the neighbor (who was not on our list of households), and sure enough, she signed a postcard, saying, “Yeah, we were just talking about this at dinner last night.”

Recently I talked to a fellow state worker about all the protests, the phone-banking, the canvassing, etc. She kept asking, “But has it made a difference? Walker’s still standing firm, even after all those horrible things he said in the prank call.” I’ve been thinking about her comments ever since and I’ve got two responses. One, you never know which action will make the difference: On February 17, I was preparing for great disappointment of the Senate passing the “budget repair” bill—I never imagined the Democratic senators would flee the state to stall it. And I don’t know that they would’ve done that if not for the massive protests. And when I attended the first rally at the Capitol, I didn’t know how the protests would grow exponentially, and so on. Two, the events of the last month have made a difference in me; I’m braver, for one, and kinder to canvassers, for another. I don’t know if the difference is temporary; I hope it’s permanent. I believe we all can be changed, for the better, by taking action.

Capitol

Continued from page 3

initiate an unnoticed nationwide assault on organized labor, he had totally failed.

It was after 1:00 AM Friday morning. By now the gallery was two-thirds empty. The Democrats continued speaking. Then suddenly something happened on the Assembly floor. The Democrats were on their feet shouting “Shame! Shame!” at the Republicans who were gathering their papers and leaving the room. A vote had been taken! The Speaker had given Assembly-persons less than one minute to vote and had then shut off the vote and declared the bill passed. This was so sudden that many Democrats (and some Republicans) had not even voted. Photographers were all over the Assembly hall.

I remained in the gallery another ten minutes as the

Assembly hall cleared. I then left the gallery, picked up my sleeping bag, and went down to the main rotunda. There a very angry (but well-behaved) crowd was being told by Democratic members of the Assembly what had happened. For about half an hour every speaker urged the crowd to be nonviolent. Every speaker also declared that in the end our side would win. Unions would survive, and those who wanted to destroy unions would be voted out of office. The crowd spontaneously began singing “We shall overcome,” and many people prepared to bed down for the night.

At that point I figured there was not much more that I could do. I picked up my sleeping bag, said “good night” to the guard at the exit, and came home. I had watched one more unique moment in Wisconsin history.

“I consider it important, indeed urgently necessary, for intellectual workers to get together, both to protect their own economic status and, also, generally speaking, to secure their influence in the political field...An organization of intellectual workers can have the greatest significance for society as a whole by influencing public opinion through publicity and education. Indeed it is its proper task to defend academic freedom, without which a healthy development of democracy is impossible.”

—Albert Einstein, charter member of AFT Local 522

Election Work Prepared Members for Current Struggles

By Chad Alan Goldberg,
UFAS Vice President,
Associate Professor of
Sociology

Last summer, the newly elected leadership of UFAS agreed that the 2010 elections for governor, state legislature, and U.S. Senate would have a major impact on the University of Wisconsin, university employees, and all public-sector workers. The elections posed a stark choice between candidates who supported working families and policies that create jobs, and candidates who scapegoat and attack public employees and give big tax breaks to the wealthy. We decided

to work together with our brothers and sisters in the labor movement to influence the election results, and we agreed this election work would be a priority for our local.

In August 2010, with help from AFT political organizer Peter Rickman, UFAS kicked off its political action campaign with an organizing meeting and workshop at the Memorial Union open to members and non-members alike. Two more political action meetings were held after the September primary elections. Joining forces with our sister union the TAA (Teaching Assistants Association) and AFT-Wisconsin, UFAS mobilized

members through phone calls, emails, and meetings to fight for a pro-labor governor, state legislature, and U.S. Senate. From late August through Election Day, UFAS members took part in union-organized phone banking and neighborhood labor walks to educate fellow union members and urge them to vote. Thanks to every UFAS member who took part in or helped out with this campaign.

Despite our efforts, reactionary forces prevailed on Election Day. As we have seen already, they are opposed to unions, public investments in higher education and other public goods, and the ideals of

solidarity and mutual aid these institutions represent. They have launched an attack on the salaries, benefits, and recently won collective bargaining rights of academic staff and faculty. But we do not view the UFAS political action campaign as a failure. Although the election results were not what we worked to achieve, the campaign served as a valuable training ground for unionism, building solidarity with other locals and helping our members develop the skills, knowledge, and experience they have used in the past several weeks and will continue to need for the struggles that lie before us.

Tax Season Info: Domestic Partner Benefits

By Steve Limbach,
Senior Instrumentation
Specialist, Department
of Physics*

Did you know that domestic partner health benefits may cost you hundreds of dollars, but not how you might suspect?

Having a domestic partner health care benefit is a good thing and it should not only contribute to the better health of those persons previously not covered, but also help in faculty and academic staff retention. The state has lost literally millions of dollars in research grants along with alienating academic staff and

faculty who have opposite or same-sex partners.

Extending health care benefits should be a win-win situation both socially and economically, however, there is a caveat, which has not been well publicized. Unless IRS rules change, adding a partner to your health plan may cost you hundreds of dollars in "additional" taxes! Please read the UW information at the following site:

http://www.bussvc.wisc.edu/uwpc/2010/imputed_income.html.

Under federal tax law, an employer's contribution towards health insurance is excluded from an employee's gross income. However,

federal law permits the exclusion only for coverage of the employee, the employee's spouse, and the employee's dependents. *If your domestic partner is not considered a "tax dependent" under federal law, your employer must include in your gross income the fair market value of the health insurance benefits provided to your domestic partner. This will likely affect your taxable income and increase your tax liability.*

Basically, the rule states that the "value" of adding a partner to your health insurance will be considered "IMPUTED INCOME." This means that the difference in the state's contribution

toward your insurance will be considered "TAXABLE INCOME." For example, if the University decided that the additional health insurance cost \$6000, your taxable income could be increased by that amount!

What can you do?

1. See your tax professional and find out how this will affect your taxes.
2. Push for Federal legislation to change the tax code.
3. Push for State legislation recognizing same-sex and opposite sex partners as having the same rights and "tax dependency" as married couples.

**Please note the author is not an attorney or tax expert.*



UFAS News

MARCH
2011

United Faculty & Academic Staff, American Federation of Teachers Local 223

<http://wi.aft.org/ufas/index.cfm>



UNION YES!

Unions are about solidarity and collective action. One of the ways we act together is pooling our resources. By pooling resources, we can accomplish more together than any one of us can on our own.

Effective immediately, I hereby request and authorize the University of Wisconsin to deduct from my salary each month a sufficient amount to provide the monthly payment of my dues for UFAS, AFT Local 223.

- This is a continuous authorization from year to year applying to the then-current Local 223 dues.
- Dues will be deducted from each salary check issued by the University.
- This authorization will remain in effect as long as I am employed at the University unless terminated by me upon written notice to: UW-Madison Payroll Office, 21 N. Park Street, Suite 5105, Madison, WI 53715.
- Termination of University employment will automatically terminate dues deduction.
- Dues are nine-tenths of one percent (0.9%) of annual gross salary.



Name _____ Title _____

School/College _____ Department _____ Building _____ Room _____

Office Phone _____ Home Phone _____ Email _____

Home Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Mail to: UFAS, P.O. Box 260323, Madison, WI 53726-0323