

Labor Extension Bulletin

A Publication of the University of Massachusetts Labor Extension Program
UMASS AMHERST ■ UMASS BOSTON ■ UMASS DARTMOUTH ■ UMASS LOWELL

VOLUME 15 ■ NUMBER 1 ■ SPRING/SUMMER 2013

Talking Truth about Taxes.... Again

The issue of taxation is once again being hotly debated both nationally and in the Commonwealth. Starting with the “fiscal cliff” and continuing into sequestration, Congress and the White House have been unable to bridge the ideological gap between the right and center. Despite the powerful influence of the Occupy Movement, which made “the 1%” a household term, little has changed in tax policy nationally.

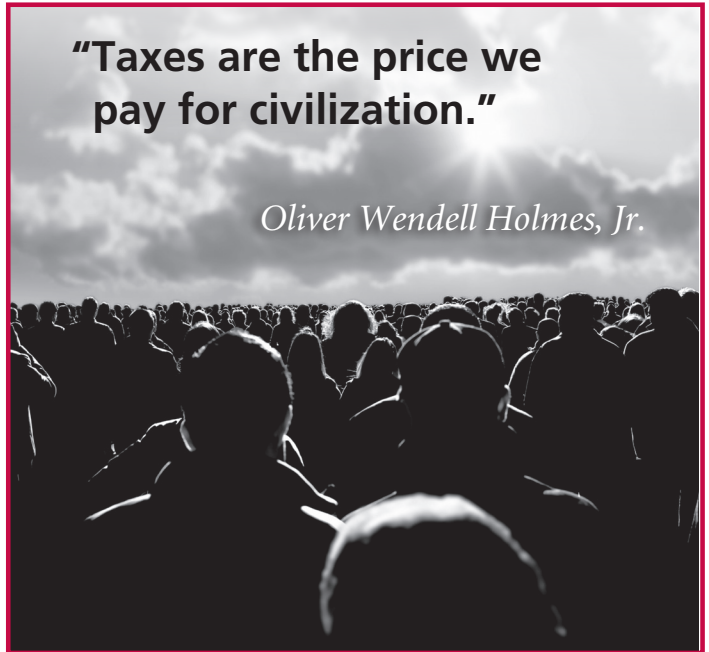
We applaud Governor Patrick’s tax proposal for many reasons. His proposal was framed by **what the Commonwealth needs**: new investments in education and transportation, and reduced cuts to other programs. Societal needs are why we need taxation, or as US Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. is often quoted, “Taxes are what we pay for civilized society.” At the same time, taxes should be fair. The Governor’s proposal addressed this issue as well. Income taxes are the most progressive taxes in the state, while sales tax is the most regressive. While the Governor proposed raising the income tax rate, his proposal would also lower the sales tax and increase personal exemptions, helping low and moderate income families.

Unfortunately, the Governor’s proposal did not prevail, largely because legislators heard mostly from constituents who didn’t want their taxes raised, including many who would have benefited from the changes Governor Patrick proposed.

Taxes continue to be maligned, in large part because of the way the issue is framed in the general media and the lack of education about what are taxes are used for and who benefits or loses from our current tax codes. Many of our public sector workers, whose very livelihood is based on various forms of taxes, have a knee jerk opposition to any tax increase, regardless of its level of fairness.

“Taxes are the price we
pay for civilization.”

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.



Anti-tax sentiments are part of the right wing ideology that has influenced not only the right, but also many working people, including our fellow union brothers and sisters. We need to challenge the claim that “government is the problem,” and rediscover the importance of the concepts of “the public good” and “community”.

There are several tax proposals that the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, along with many unions and organizations are supporting, including the “Act to Invest in our Communities”. If these efforts are to be successful, we must do more to educate our members about the issues of public good and investment. There are excellent state and national resources that provide information and debunk anti-tax myths (see Spotlight and Resource Corner).

The Labor Extension Program offers a number of educational workshops that address these issues. “Re-Framing the Debate: Building Support for the Public Sector” helps members identify the underlying “frame” of media coverage and develop our own messages. “Shrink, Shift, Shaft” (developed in collaboration with other labor educators) helps participants recognize the neoliberal ideology that “shafts” working class people and the majority of the country, and to practice responses with co-workers.

Around THE STATE

UMB Labor Resource Center's Annual Appreciation Cruise Thursday, June 20, 5:30-8:00 p.m.

Cost: call in advance for tickets

Location: UMass Boston

Contact: Wally Soper, wally.soper@umb.edu, 617-287-7267

Join us for appetizers on the dock and then for a relaxing sunset cruise around the Boston harbor.

Summer Women's Leadership Opportunities

27th WILD Annual Summer Institute

June 28, 29 and 30th

Cost: \$220 for room, board, materials. Childcare \$60, \$30 additional children

Location: University of Massachusetts - Amherst

Contact: Kathy Casavant, 617-825-0520, kathy@wildlabor.org

Theme: Building Strong Multicultural Coalitions

WILD is an inspirational educational program that provides women with the leadership vision, confidence and skills to become more effective leaders and organizers in the Massachusetts labor movement. The program begins with dinner on Friday, June 28th, and continues through the weekend with workshops on leadership development and a variety of skill building workshops. There is also ample time to network with other labor sisters and have a lot of fun. The Institute ends at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 30th.

37th Annual UALE Northeast Regional Summer School for Union Women

Sunday through Friday, July 20 – 25

Cost: \$640/person for double, \$715/person for single

Location: Cornell University, Ithaca, NY

Contact: Susan Winning, 978-934-3127, susan_winning@uml.edu; Anneta Argyres, 617-287-7229, anneta.argyres@umb.edu

Theme: Raising Our Voices: Union Women Leading Democracy in Our Work, Our County and Our World

This five-day program brings together union women who are rank and-file members, staff and officers to strengthen their knowledge of the American labor movement, understand its present challenges and issues, and develop skills that will prepare them to be more active union members and leaders.

The Resource Corner



Analyzing Taxes and Understanding Public Investment

Economic Policy Institute's research on budget, taxes and public investment (www.epi.org/research/budget-taxes-and-public-investment) provides reports, economic snapshots, and commentary on the impacts of national tax policies.

MassPIRG's study, "Getting our Money's Worth"

Promoting Transparency and Accountability for Corporate Tax Subsidies in Massachusetts," (masspirgedfund.org/reports/maf/getting-our-moneys-worth) provides analysis of MA's special business tax breaks, exploring the need for adequate accountability measures, public transparency, and measures requiring companies to return subsidies when they fail to deliver promised benefits.

National Priorities Project recent report,

"Federal Spending in Your State, 2012-2014,"

(nationalpriorities.org/en/analysis/2013/federal-spending-your-state-2012-2014) documents the impact of federal spending on state budgets, as well as on state residents who receive assistance through programs funded by federal grants. Their animated video, "If paychecks could talk," (nationalpriorities.org/en/analysis/2013/taxday-2013/animated-video-if-paychecks-could-talk) explains that taxes fund programs like clean water, health care, roads and bridges.

Tax Policy Center (www.taxpolicycenter.org) is an Urban Institute and Brookings Institutions joint venture that provides analysis about tax policy. The website features summaries and analyses of aspects of the tax system, including "The Tax Policy Briefing Book," as well as "calculators" to explore how tax policies affect working families.

Goodbye to our Brother Charley Richardson

It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to our colleague, friend and wonderful labor educator, Charley Richardson, who passed away earlier this month. Charley worked tirelessly and passionately on behalf of the labor movement, urging labor to take a continuous bargaining approach to management's ongoing changes in the workplace. He supported and inspired his co-workers at UMass Lowell, the other UMass labor programs, and union activists in the U.S., Canada and around the world. Charley was also a tremendous anti-war activist, and with his partner, Nancy Lessin, formed Military Families Speak Out, which touched the lives of families across the country. Through all his work, he touched the lives of many. We will miss him, but his spirit will always be with us. We are setting up a scholarship fund at UML in his name. You can contribute online at www.uml.edu/poweronline, choose "Contribute to a fund not listed here" as gift designation and include Charley Richardson Scholarship Fund in text box. You may also write a check to the University of Massachusetts Lowell, with Charley Richardson in memo and send it to Susan Winning at the address in the box of this newsletter. You may contact Susan Winning for more information (contact info on back of newsletter).



Charley Richardson receiving the United Association for Labor Education (UALE) Lifetime Achievement Award

Program Notes

■ UMASS AMHERST

At UMass Amherst we have big changes to announce! Veteran labor educator, Dale Melcher, retired in December after nearly 38 years at the University, 12 years with the Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies department and 26 years at the Labor Center, the last 18 as extension coordinator. She has retired from the University, she says, but not from the economic and social justice movement. You can still find Dale doing workshops at WILD, the NE Summer School for Union Women, Western MA JwJ and elsewhere. She has also been sighted leafleting at Stop and Shop and Wal-Mart, doing yoga and mucking about in her garden. We will miss her.

We welcome our new colleague, Clare Hammonds. Her position is as Professor of Practice, meaning she will conduct and support applied research and the labor extension program. Clare Hammonds has worked as a researcher and labor educator for several unions. She will receive a Ph.D. in Sociology in 2013 from Brandeis University. After July 1, 2013, she can be reached at 413-545-6166

■ UMASS BOSTON

As many of you have heard, our undergraduate major and minor in Labor Studies have been put on hold. We appreciate the outpouring of support that has come our way in the form of emails, phone calls and letters. While we work with the University to reopen these programs, we are excited to welcome new union members and labor activists to our Professional Certificate of Labor Leadership. To learn more about our courses, or receive a poster about the program for your union hall, please contact Wally Soper at 617-287-7267. We were excited to host Kent Wong, Director of UCLA's Center for Labor Research and Education, and Sofia Campos, National Chair of United We Dream, as part of their Massachusetts tour advancing the case for immigration reform and for education rights for undocumented students. It is with warm wishes that we send Professor Terry McLarney off into the land of retirement! Terry has touched the lives of many labor activists through his work on labor law and on international workers organizations. He will be dearly missed, but his global view of working people's struggles and his wry sense of humor will stay with us always.

■ UMASS DARTMOUTH

At UMass Dartmouth, we have been honored to invite and welcome two strong union women to share their experiences and talents with the campus and the community. Dr. Stephanie Luce of the City University of New York came to be the keynote speaker for International Women's Day at UMass Dartmouth. Her inspirational talk reinforced the power of organizing and encouraged those in attendance to fight for workplace justice. Musician and activist, Bev Grant also came to UMD this spring to present *We Were There*, a multimedia presentation on women in social and labor movement history. Eight local women activists took on the persona of individual women in our shared history. This fall we will hold our annual awards dinner and the nominated Dubin awardee is Senator Elizabeth Warren. The dinner will be held at the Venus de Milo in Swansea on October 24, 2013. We will also be presenting an open enrollment Steward's Training this fall.

■ UMASS LOWELL

Labor education's role in the *Work, Labor and Society (WLS)* minor has continued to grow. We helped develop an internship for one of the students in the minor. March and April were particularly busy months, with our participation in the Public Art committee and the sixth annual *Voices of Working Women* annual women's luncheon, which focused this year on work/life balance. Both were part of Lowell Women's Week. We helped plan the North Shore education conference, *Labor's Past, Labor's Future: Organizing in Hard Times* and moderated a workshop on "New Organizing." As part of the Future of Work research initiative, we have funded a graduate student whose paper on "Jobs and the Economy" will be released at a New Lynn Coalition event in June. Bev Grant performed with UMass Lowell students in the exciting *We Are the 99%: Women Organizing for Economic Justice Forum, Co-sponsored by the Center for Women and Work*, the WLS minor and labor education program.

S P O T L I G H T

MassBudget

Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center

Information.
Participation.
Democracy.

Do you need resources to track Massachusetts's legislative budgets as well as analyze state policy issues? We have great resources at the click of a mouse thanks to the strategists and policy analysts at the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center. Known as MassBudget, the staff produces reports on specific topics that look at trends in areas such as education, health care funding, human services, and tax policy.

They provide a resource called the Budget Monitors that offers clear and timely analysis of each version of the state budget: the Governor's proposal and those of the Legislature. Because of this program, you don't have to sift through hundreds of line items to understand what the budget funds.

Also available on their website is the Budget Browser which provides comprehensive state budget information that can be accessed and understood by anyone interested in how the state uses its resources. The Browser allows you to view information on Massachusetts state budgets from Fiscal Year (FY) 2001 to present, as well as current budget proposals offered by the Governor and the Legislature.

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UMass Amherst

Labor Extension Program

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200 Hicks Way

Amherst, MA 01003-9277

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In the Past 6 months...

The UMass Labor Extension Program has provided trainings on these topics...

- **Advanced Stewards training Basic Stewards training**
SEIU 509 Public Sector stewards
- **Basic Stewards training**
SEIU 509 Private sector stewards
- **Bargaining Strategies: Developing a Contract Campaign Boston Newspaper**
Guild/CWA
- **The Boss Can't Do That, Can He? Teaching Workers Rights: Know Your Rights as an ABE Worker**
Mass Coalition for Adult Education (MCAE)
- **Chapter Leadership Initiative**
SEIU Local 888

To Contact the UMass Labor Extension Program:

■ **UMASS AMHERST LABOR EXTENSION PROGRAM**

Labor Center, Thompson Hall, 200 Hicks Way
Amherst, MA 01003-9277 www.umass.edu/lrrc
Clare Hammond: 413-545-6166 Fax: 413-545-0110
Check website for email address.

■ **UMASS BOSTON LABOR EXTENSION PROGRAM**

CPCS Labor Resource Center, 100 Morrissey Blvd.
Boston, MA 02125-3393 www.umb.edu/lrc
Annetta Argyres: 617-287-7229
email: anneta.argyres@umb.edu

■ **UMASS DARTMOUTH LABOR EXTENSION PROGRAM**

Dubin Labor Education Center, 285 Old Westport Road
North Dartmouth, MA 02747 www.umassd.edu/labored/
Kim Wilson Venancio: 508-999-8781 Fax: 508-999-9168
email: kwilson@umassd.edu

■ **UMASS LOWELL LABOR EXTENSION PROGRAM**

600 Suffolk St., 5th Floor, Suite 503
Lowell, MA 01854 www.uml.edu/laborextension/
Susan Winning: 978-934-3127 Fax: 978-934-4033
email: susan_winning@uml.edu

Contact the UMass Labor Extension Program at <http://umasslep.org>

- **Developing New Leaders for a More Engaged Membership**
United Association for Labor Education (UALE) National Conference
- **Leadership Development Workshop**
SEIU Local 509 Private sector leaders
- **Mobilizing Your Members**
South Eastern Mass Labor Council
- **Old and New Models of Union Organizing**
Massachusetts Jobs with Justice
- **Organizing for Change at Work and at School**
Third Eye Unlimited, New Bedford
- **Strategic Planning**
Arnold B. Dubin Labor Center board and staff
Merrimack Valley Central Labor Council