



# Unity

**WI**  
**AFL-CIO**

*The Wisconsin State AFL-CIO  
29th Biennial Convention*

August 29th and 30th, 2016

Madison Concourse Hotel, Madison, WI

[wisconsinunity.org](http://wisconsinunity.org)



## Celebrating Unity at the 29th Biennial Convention in Madison

On Monday, August 29, 2016, the 29th biennial Wisconsin State AFL-CIO convention convened in Madison. Hundreds of delegates traveled from across Wisconsin to gather together in our state's Capitol to shape the direction of the Wisconsin AFL-CIO through the democratic process.

Over the course of the day, delegates heard from Wisconsin AFL-CIO Officers Phil Neuenfeldt and Stephanie Bloomingdale, Russ Feingold, state Senator Jennifer Shilling, Congressman Tim Ryan of Ohio, Parkland Institute's Ricardo Acuña, voting rights advocate Anita Johnson from Citizen Action of Wisconsin, Laura Dresser the Executive Director of COWS and water rights expert Professor Timothy Ehlinger.

Invigorating debate and discussion continues to build support and solidarity through Unity, our convention's overarching theme. The Wisconsin labor movement has risen to take on each and every challenge with the strength of steadfast solidarity. We are proud of our Unity. We celebrate our Unity at this convention.

The first day of the convention ended with a reception in CIRC at the Concourse Hotel. Delegates gathered over sliders, mashed potatoes and union-made beer to unpack the day's speakers and continue discussion of working class issues.

### Opening Ceremonies

Kevin Gundlach, President of the South Central Federation of Labor, called the Convention to Order. Mahlon Mitchell, President of the Professional Fire Fighters of Wisconsin, and the Fire Fighters Honor Guard proceeded with opening ceremonies with the Presentation of the Colors. Laura Long of Madison sang the national anthem. Pastor Shelia Stubbs of End Time Ministries International Church provided the Invocation.

Report of the Rules Committee was read by George Walls, CWA, and adopted by the delegates. The Report of the Credentials Committee was read by Mike Follett, IBEW, and adopted by the delegates.



Mark Maierle, Operating Engineers Local 420



Vocalist Laura Long and the Professional Fire Fighters of Wisconsin Honor Guard

*Secretary-Treasurer Bloomingdale:*  
**Unity is the tool workers have to gain power**

Secretary-Treasurer Stephanie Bloomingdale energized the crowd with a speech that focused on the past, present and future of the labor movement. Secretary-Treasurer Bloomingdale stated that unity is the tool with which working people gain the power to build a strong middle class. "Unity is what workers have always used to make the incredible contributions to our country, to our way of life and to society as a whole. Unity is the tool workers have to gain power. Power in the workplace, power in our communities, power to build strong families."

Outlining challenges facing the labor movement, Secretary-Treasurer Bloomingdale gave hope to the crowd, explaining that the best days are ahead of labor when we commit to continue the fight for all workers and organize. "Whether you work behind a screw cutting lathe or in front of a kindergarten classroom, we want you; if you go to work and swing the boom of a crane or the handle of a mop, you belong in a union; if you wear a hard hat or a hair net, we'll make a place for you in the House of Labor."



*Wisconsin AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Stephanie Bloomingdale*

*Laura Dresser:*  
**As Unions Decline, Inequality Grows**

Associate Director of COWS, Laura Dresser, a labor economist who is a vocal supporter of raising the minimum wage, gave a detailed report about wage inequality in Wisconsin and the increasing gap between worker productivity and wages. Dresser exposed bad corporate policy that creates huge corporate profits and stifles working families with stagnant incomes.

Dresser's report did not paint a pretty picture for working families in Wisconsin, stating "the last 40 years have not been particularly kind to the average worker." She ended her address with a call to action showing a strong correlation between the decline in union membership, and the share of income going to the top 10 percent—making it very clear that unions have a vital role in ending wage inequality.



*Delegates to the 29th Biennial Convention*





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## Special Video Message from Hillary Clinton

Hillary Clinton, in a video, directly addressed convention delegates. Secretary Clinton thanked union workers stating “you don’t just fight for your members, you fight for workers everywhere. Like a lot of great things in America, my campaign is union-built and I’m honored to have your support.” Clinton outlined that it is essential that we build an economy that works for everyone, not just those at the top. If elected, Clinton pledged to make the biggest investment in good jobs since WWII, to fight back against attacks on workers, to say no to bad trade deals and to defend the right to organize and bargain collectively pointing out that “right to work is wrong for workers and wrong for America.”

### Congressman Tim Ryan, Ohio: **Hillary Clinton Has a Plan for Working Families**

Congressman Tim Ryan from the 13th District of Ohio addressed delegates with a fiery denouncement of Donald Trump, and high praise for Hillary Clinton. Delegates strongly believe in the experience and leadership of Hillary Clinton and her cohesive plans for the economy and infrastructure.

The Congressman recalled his upbringing honoring workers. “I remember being taught never to cross a picket line. I learned basic respect for workers.” An energetic speaker, he pumped up the crowd to continue the fight to help all working families across the country.



Ohio Congressman Tim Ryan



Professor Chad Goldberg, AFT Higher Ed Council

## Organizer of the Year!

The 2016 Wisconsin State AFL-CIO Organizing Award was awarded to the Higher Education Council, American Federation of Teachers - Wisconsin, who organized a historic statewide “No Confidence” vote of the University of Wisconsin system. The vote engaged and organized workers in the higher education system all across Wisconsin. Kim Kohlhaas, President of AFT-Wisconsin, presented the award to Chad Goldberg, UW Professor of Sociology and President of the United Faculty and Academic Staff, who accepted on behalf of the Higher Education Council.

## Ricardo Acuña and The Parkland Institute

Ricardo Acuña, Director of the Parkland Institute in Alberta Canada, brought a message of international solidarity to the Unity Convention. “International solidarity is not just about supporting each other. International solidarity is about lifting each other up during our individual struggles and picking up each other’s issues in our own fight. We watched your organizing, your mobilization, your campaigns and your fightback from Alberta and were inspired. We learned from your struggle and we know you stand with Canadian workers.”

Parkland Institute is an Alberta-wide, non-partisan research centre situated within the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta.



*Ricardo Acuña Director of the Parkland Institute*

## *Russ Feingold:* Let’s export Wisconsin products, not jobs

Delegates were on their feet to welcome Russ Feingold to the convention floor. Pledging his support of union rights and working families, Russ laid out a union-approved vision to bring back jobs and raise wages. Feingold pledged his support for equal pay for equal work, providing paid time off to care for a loved one or a newborn and strengthening unions to strengthen the middle class. Feingold reiterated his opposition to bad trade deals that cost Wisconsin jobs. “We weren’t fooled by NAFTA and we won’t be fooled by the TPP.”



*Anita Johnson, Citizen Action Wisconsin*

## Anita Johnson Breaks Down Wisconsin Voting Changes

Anita Johnson of Citizen Action of Wisconsin gave the convention extremely important information about the new voting laws in Wisconsin. Johnson explained the real-life implications of Scott Walker’s voting laws designed to make it harder for Wisconsin citizens to cast their ballot. “Please give this information to family, friends, co-workers and churchgoers, don’t keep this information to yourselves.”

Johnson talked about helping a homeless veteran go through a six-month process to finally get a free ID and detailed how many ridiculous hoops the veteran voter had to jump through. “We were told by a DMV clerk that getting a new ID would take six days—we didn’t get one for six months.”



*U.S. Senate Candidate Russ Feingold*





*President Phil Neuenfeldt:*  
**Our Energy Spurs a  
Thousand Conversations**

President Phil Neuenfeldt addressed delegates, revving the crowd up for the November 2016 election and beyond. Outlining the challenges facing many Wisconsinites — stagnant wages, limited good job opportunities, attacks on collective bargaining and voting rights — President Neuenfeldt explained the importance of electing pro-worker politicians like Hillary Clinton and Russ Feingold on November 8, 2016.

President Neuenfeldt stressed that our eyes must also be on 2018 when voters will have the opportunity to vote Governor Scott Walker out of office. “Our energy spurs a thousand conversations.” President Neuenfeldt urged delegates to get involved with the Labor 2016 program by recruiting fellow union members to knock doors, make phone calls and have conversations in the workplace about supporting union-approved candidates and the importance of voting on Election Day.

“It’s time to come together in unity to strengthen our middle class by strengthening unions. It’s time to come together in unity to fight for strong contracts that build strong communities for us all. It’s time to come together in unity so that we can leave behind a better workplace and a better life for the next generation. And generations after that! Solidarity!”

*Timothy Ehlinger:*  
**Wisconsin’s Waterways  
and Drinking Water**

UW-Milwaukee professor Timothy Ehlinger is an expert on the economics of water. Ehlinger highlighted the major issues surrounding not only Wisconsin water, but water around the world, such as who governs water, and who controls its flow. “Water governance in Wisconsin is failing. Every single Wisconsin citizen has the right to free, clean, accessible water.”



Wisconsin AFL-CIO President Phil Neuenfeldt

**Committee Reports**

Kelli Harrison, UAW, chaired the Legislative Committee and Scott Van Derven, Legislative Committee Secretary, NALC, presented resolutions from the Committee. The Report of the Secretary-Treasurer’s Committee, chaired by Alex Hoekstra, Machinists Union, was reported by Steve Breitlow, Plumbers & Pipefitters UA, and adopted by the delegates.



### Unity Day 2:

## Kicking off Tuesday, August 30

Rabbi Renee Bauer provided an invocation for delegates and the entire community, "together, may you bring justice to the workers of this state and in your efforts may you be blessed."

Congressman Mark Pocan, State Representative and Minority Assembly Leader Peter Barca, AFL-CIO's Policy Director and Special Council Damon Silvers, Trans-Pacific Partnership experts Dean Baker and Brooke Güven, and AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler addressed the convention.

The convention was adjourned by President Phil Neuenfeldt and closed to the tune of the Drop Kick Murphy's "Take 'Em Down" – a song dedicated to Wisconsin workers and the fight for union rights around the world.

### Liz Shuler:

## Send Ron Johnson Back to Oshkosh

AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler praised the resilience of the Wisconsin labor movement in the face of unprecedented attacks and highlighted key worker victories in organizing, collective bargaining and political action. Let's remember, "Scott Walker's Presidential campaign was over before it started," joked Shuler.

"Sisters and brothers what you started here in Wisconsin has become a national movement for justice. We can change the economic rules and make real progress for working people. Chances like this come along maybe once or twice in a generation, we have to seize this opportunity and this moment." Shuler was specific in her rally cry, "we are going to move this country forward by putting Russ Feingold back into the Senate and sending Ron Johnson back to Oshkosh."

### Rep. Peter Barca:

## Tide Will Turn for Workers This November

Representative Peter Barca brought a positive message of change to the convention saying that Wisconsinites are getting tired of Republican-backed policies that hurt workers, seniors and veterans and lower the standard of living for the middle class. Citing numerous polls showing low Walker approval ratings, Barca was confident that "the tide is finally turning here in Walker's Wisconsin and people have finally begun to wake up...Over 10,000 pink slips were handed out last year in Wisconsin, and we are in the bottom third for job growth in the country. People in this state know that we are not moving in the right direction."

### Damon Silvers:

## Where Have the Gains Gone?

Damon Silvers, Director of Policy and Special Counsel at the AFL-CIO, presented a question to delegates, where have all the economic gains gone? The answer? To the top, richest percent of our economy. Excluding workers from sharing in the gains of our labor is messing up our economy. Silvers explained, "when working people are cut out -- politically, socially, economically -- our economy doesn't work. We are stuck in stagnation because workers aren't sharing in the gains and we are dismantling workers' bargaining power." You want to see gains? asked Silvers. Respect workers, strengthen collective bargaining rights and invest in updating our infrastructure.

## Post-Convention Canvassing

Delegates grabbed walk packets and took to the streets of Madison to knock doors in support of union-approved candidates for 2016 elections on November 8. Union members will be a force in the historic 2016 elections. The Labor 2016 grassroots mobilization campaign is heating up as the election nears with phone banks and canvasses rocking around the state.



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# Resolutions

## Adopted by Delegates

*at the 29th Biennial Convention*



- No. 1:** Repeal Act 10 and Right to Work and Restore Prevailing Wage
- No. 2:** Strengthen Our Labor Rights, Strengthen the Middle Class
- No. 3:** Raising Wages, Fighting for \$15
- No. 4:** Support a Reasonably-Funded 21st Century Infrastructure
- No. 5:** Support County Veterans Service Offices
- No. 6:** Reclaim America's Promise by Supporting and Funding Wisconsin's Public Schools
- No. 7:** Non-Partisan Redistricting for Fair Representation
- No. 8:** Improve Social Security Benefits
- No. 9:** Eliminate Political Kickbacks for the Wealthiest
- No. 10:** Hold For-Profit Colleges Accountable, Support the Educational Approval Board
- No. 11:** Support for UW System and Students
- No. 12:** Oppose Attempts to Weaken Overtime Protections
- No. 13:** Protect Wisconsin's Drinking Water
- No. 14:** Support Local Economic Development Through City Center Districts
- No. 15:** Workers Should Be Able to Thrive in the Gig Economy
- No. 16:** Support A Strong VA Healthcare System and Oppose the Closing of VA Hospitals
- No. 17:** Reining in Abusive Medical Billing Practices and Crippling Debt
- No. 18:** Oppose Disastrous Trade Policies like the TPP
- No. 19:** Stop the Outsourcing of Jobs
- No. 20:** Buy Wisconsin-Made Goods and Services
- No. 21:** Support Labor 2016 Political Program
- No. 22:** Reaffirms Past Convention Action on Legislative Issues