

OPINION

Our Faith, Our Vote and God's World

Join me in voting

BY REV. JAMES MOOS

I vote because I am a citizen. Yes, I am a citizen of the United States and I take civic responsibilities seriously.



More importantly, however, I am a citizen of God's realm; as such I am called to live out my faith in the public arena. This means casting my vote not out of economic self-interest, but for the sake of all of God's people and all of creation, and especially on behalf of the vulnerable and powerless.

I vote because of a little Palestinian girl named Siham in East Jerusa-

lem who my wife and I sponsor through Global Ministries' Child Sponsorship program. Siham's future and the prospects for peace in the Middle East will be deeply impacted by U.S. foreign policy. Siham cannot hold our nation's leadership accountable, but we can.

I vote because I live in Cleveland, Ohio, a city where 44 out of every 100 adults over the age of 16 lack basic literacy skills. They cannot read a bus schedule, or write a letter explaining a credit card billing error. Through elections we both demand better educational systems and we support them.

I vote because 15 percent of households in the wealthiest coun-

try on earth lack food security. At some point in the past year, they had insufficient nutritional food to lead healthy, active lives. While private generosity is good and necessary in addressing these needs, the structural inequities that underlie them are matters of public policy.

I vote because, as a former military chaplain, I know all too well the grief and trauma inflicted upon the innocent and suffered by veterans and their families during unjust and seemingly never-ending wars. On Nov. 6, we will choose the next Commander-in-Chief.

I vote because the first eight months of 2012 were the hottest on record. South Pacific islanders are being swamped by rising sea levels

due to global warming. The legislators we choose will decide on whether we take bold action, or continue on the path of environmental catastrophe.

I vote because nearly 50 million Americans lack health insurance, some of them are close friends and family members. Access to quality health care is not a privilege, it is a human right. The future of that access will be determined on Election Day.

I vote because I affirm marriage equality. In the land where the constitution guarantees equal protection to all citizens, same gender loving people are entitled to all the rights and responsibilities of marriage. Elected officials and ballot

measures are keys to attaining and maintaining marriage equality.

I vote because, while faith is intensely personal, it is never purely private.

In his Letter from Birmingham Jail, Martin Luther King chastised his contemporaries who were "... more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained glass windows."

Faith that is nurtured in the church must be boldly lived out in the world. In a democracy, the ballot box is one place for us to live out that faith. Please join me in voting.

Rev. James Moos is executive minister of Wider Church Ministries for the United Church of Christ.

Supremely High Stakes in This Election

BY MARGE BAKER

The rights of working families across America hang in the balance this Election Day.



The future of laws protecting working people — our right to safe working conditions, to organize, and to sue employers who have discriminated against us — will depend on who we elect.

But when it comes to workers' rights, some of the most influential government officials we'll be voting for are ones whose names don't actually appear on the ballot. Either Barack Obama or Mitt Romney will nominate Supreme Court justices — as many as three — over the next four years.

Those men and women, serving lifetime appointments, have a profound impact on our nation's laws for a generation. Ronald Reagan's

administration ended a quarter century ago, but two of the Supreme Court justices he nominated, Antonin Scalia and Anthony Kennedy, continue to form the core of a 5-4 majority that consistently twists the law to favor big corporations over the rights of individuals.

That 5-4 majority could be reversed if Obama has a chance to name our next Supreme Court justices. He's already put Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan on the Court, and they are exactly the kind of judges we need on the nation's highest court. Both of them have a clear commitment to our rights under the Constitution and a deep understanding of the impact of the law on the daily lives of Americans.

In contrast, Mitt Romney has said he would nominate justices like Scalia and his fellow pro-corporate justices Samuel Alito, Clarence Thomas, and John Roberts. In case after

case, they have confounded logic, ignored or overruled precedent, and ignored the plain meaning of laws in order to rule in favor of the powerful and against ordinary Americans, especially workers.

It was Romney's model justices who notoriously told Lilly Ledbetter

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— and every other woman who discovered her employer had for years been illegally paying her less than her male counterparts — that they couldn't sue for compensation for

all those years of discrimination. These are the same justices who tossed out a nationwide class-action discrimination lawsuit on behalf of 1.5 million women employees of Walmart who had shown they were victims of systemic illegal discrimination.

They misinterpreted language in the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 to make it harder for victims of discrimination to win in court, giving it a different meaning from identical language in the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

But perhaps the most astonishing of their 5-4 rulings against working people came earlier this year, in a case called *Knox v. SEIU*. Romney's model justices made up a rule that makes it much harder for public sector unions to raise the dues they need to effectively advocate on behalf of workers — and they did so even though neither

party in the case even asked them to consider the issue.

Every American deserves their day in court. That is part of the American ideal of justice, and it is embedded in our Constitution. But that "day in court" becomes nothing more than a charade if the judge rules against you on the basis of something you never even had a chance to argue.

Over the next 20-30 years, the Supreme Court will decide numerous cases involving the rights of workers. These cases will affect working Americans all over the country. If Mitt Romney has a chance to put his stamp on the Court, it will be bad news for working people long after he leaves office.

Marge Baker is the executive vice president of People For the American Way. PFAW.org. Distributed via OtherWords.org.

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