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Labor Day: Beyond a Holiday

SAN DIEGO VIEWPOINT

Dr. John E. Warren

Appropriately 126 years ago, the first Labor Day holiday was established to honor American workers and their place and importance in our society. It was set aside as a time for parades and celebrations. It was a time to honor workers, no matter what area of labor.

In the last 60 years, this holiday has also become a time for politicians to knock off their fall campaigns with speeches and appearances at civic events; but now, how things have changed.

While the nation's unemployment rate appears to be stuck at approximately 10 percent, officially, it is more than 16 percent for African American adults, and nearly 50 percent for African American youth between 16 and 21.

For what may be the first time in this nation, with such high unemployment there is no national policy, legislation or proposed program to create jobs, as of this writing.

This lack of a jobs initiative appears to be a part of the Republican plan to cripple and wipe out gains made by organized labor, which represents the last potential threat to the idea of help-

ing this nation's poor and unemployed at the expense of the wealthy.

This is not a time for celebration, when one considers that more than 40 years ago this nation adopted a Full Employment Policy under the Humphrey/Hawkins Full Employment Act. No one appears to remember this, includ-

whether poor or middle class. Today, the Tea Party and its Republican supporters are hiding behind a false concern for this nation's debt, while seeking to protect the wealth of the rich by fighting tax increases and protecting their tax brakes at all cost—regardless of who is hurt.

The greatest fight for Organized Labor is no longer for pay raises, but the keeping of jobs for those who are employed, while fighting not to lose health benefits and future retirement for those

isulative advocates. African Americans in particular should not forget the struggles of A. Philip Randolph and the Sleeping Car Porters who had to fight for human dignity in their work place as well as wages.

Today, the so called “playing field” is still not level when one considers the disparity in wages that continues between men and women and between Blacks and Whites in particular. While other ethnic groups like Latinos and Asians have entered the picture, disproportionate representation of Blacks still exist in the Trade and Construction industries; imported workers are taking jobs that many Americans refuse to do, even in this period of high unemployment. A number of unemployed people must come to grips with the difference between a job and a position.

Yes, this Labor Day is not one for celebration. Rather, it is a day for reflection, observance and a recommitment to developing strategies that will provide jobs for our own unemployed, before exporting jobs or importing workers for existing technical jobs.

Truly the struggle continues.

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ing Organized Labor.

That policy set triggers for unemployment assistance to areas of high unemployment, since all of the country was not affected equally.

The difference between then and now is that 40 years ago America still had a conscience and concern for neighbors and fellow citizens

younger workers entering the workforce.

Labor must educate its new generation of Public Employees to the struggles and accomplishments of the Labor movement during the last 50 year. The struggle now is to obtain Collective Bargaining under state by state attack by the Tea Party and its Republican leg-

Republicans Attack Obama on Tax Cut

If there was ever any lingering doubt that Republicans favor the rich over poor and middle-class Americans, it should be removed by the GOP's opposition to President Obama's proposal to extend the payroll tax cut for another year.

Let's face it: Republicans oppose almost everything advocated by the nation's first Black president. And Republican leaders have made it clear that their top priority is defeating Obama in 2012, even if that means wrecking the country in the process.

Whether it was coming up with a budget compromise last December or the most recent round of deficit haggling, Republicans have adamantly refused to roll back the tax rate for the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans to the pre-George W. Bush level. That move alone would cut the federal deficit by half. GOP leaders also refuse to close tax loopholes that allow some U.S. companies to pay little or no federal taxes.

Last year, Congress approved President Obama's 1-year plan to reduce the share of payroll taxes designated for Social Security from 6.2 percent to 4.2 percent. Now, Obama is proposing adding another year, a move that would affect 46 percent of all taxpayers, saving the average family \$1,000.

But Republicans, who, until now, had never met a tax cut they didn't like, are balking.

Republican Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee said: “We don't need short-term gestures. We need long-term fundamental changes in our tax structure and our regulatory structure that people who create jobs can rely on.”

Republicans are conveniently ignoring the fact that the Bush tax cuts, enacted in 2001 and 2003, were supposed to be temporary.

THE CURRY REPORT

George E. Curry



When they were set to expire, both Republicans and President Obama extended them.

1985, the top 5 percent of the households, the wealthiest 5 percent, had a net worth of 8 trillion dollars, which is a lot. Today, after serial bubble after serial bubble, the top 5 percent have a net worth of 40 trillion.”

Republican National Chairman Ed Gillespie defends the GOP's defense of the wealthy by contending that 80 percent of the tax relief to the rich goes to job-creating small businesses. FactCheck.org debunks that myth.

“It may be true that 79% of

According to the Congressional Budget Office, providing tax cuts to the wealthy is the least effective way to stimulate the economy because rich people are more likely to save the money. A more effective way to encourage spending is by placing money in the hands of poor and middle-class citizens, people more likely to spend the funds.

And that's exactly what President Obama seeks to do by extending the payroll tax cut, which would benefit almost half of all Americans. If it is not extended, it will expire Jan. 1.

Social Security payroll taxes apply only to the first \$106,800 of wages. Many people are unaware that the rate was reduced by 2 percent last year because they pay little attention to their pay stubs. The employer's share was not reduced from its rate of 12.4 percent for each worker.

Many Republicans have put themselves in a box by pledging to never raise taxes. Over the past 25 years, Grover Norquist, president of the conservative Americans for Tax Reform, has encouraged Republicans to sign a pledge that they won't raise taxes. More than 200 members of Congress have signed that pledge.

Republicans have voted against letting the Bush tax cuts expire because, according to their reasoning, that would amount to a tax increase. Many of those same Republicans, however, object to extending the payroll tax cut proposed by Obama. It shows how far Republicans are willing to go to protect the wealthy, to oppose Obama, and to be insensitive to the poor and middle-class.

Republicans oppose almost everything advocated by the nation's first Black president

When he was a candidate, Obama pledged to end the Bush tax cuts for the top 2 percent of taxpayers – individuals earning at least \$200,000 a year and couples making \$250,000 or more. Under pressure from Republicans, however, Obama agreed last December to extend the cuts.

upper-income taxpayers have some income from business, but Gillespie's definition of ‘small’ business actually includes big accounting firms, law firms and real-estate partnerships, and ‘businesses’ that are really only sidelines – such as occasional rental income from a corporate chief's

According to Citizens for Tax Justice, 52.5 percent of the Bush tax cuts benefit the richest 5 percent of taxpayers

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David Stockman, the budget director in the Reagan administration, called for letting the Bush tax cuts expire and said the rich are getting richer while the poor are getting poorer. In an interview with 60 Minutes, he said: “In

condo,” it said. “In fact, tax statistics show that upper-income taxpayers get more of their income from salaries, capital gains, stock dividends and interest than they do from small business.”

The Tax Policy Center found that slightly more than 22 percent of income reported by the wealthy will be derived from business income.

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