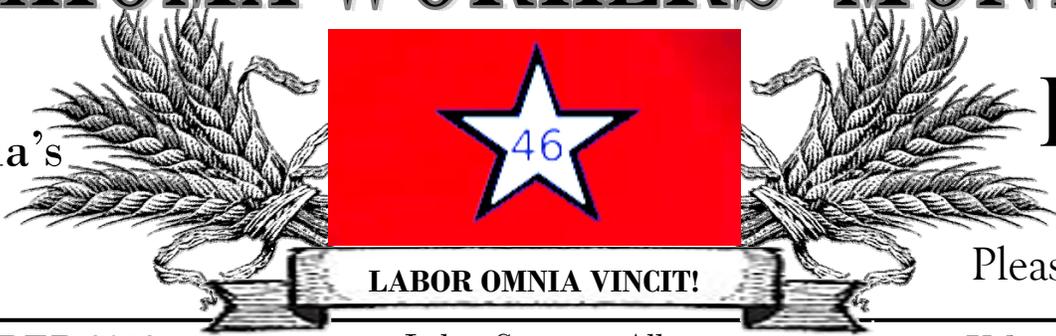


OKLAHOMA WORKERS' MONTHLY

News for
Oklahoma's
Working
Class



FREE

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Labor Conquers All

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Food Stamp Cuts Go Into Effect November 1

Post-Recession Food Aid Expires, but Is the Recession Really Over for Oklahoma's Working Class?

As of the first of November, the 47 million Americans who rely on food stamps to meet their nutritional needs have less to eat. The decrease comes from the expiration of a boost in funding for the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) in effect since 2009 as a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, commonly known as the federal stimulus package. The stimulus was introduced in response to the recession that began in 2008. Since the fall of 2008, the stock market has completely recovered, and yet unemployment remains elevated across the U.S. has nearly doubled. These

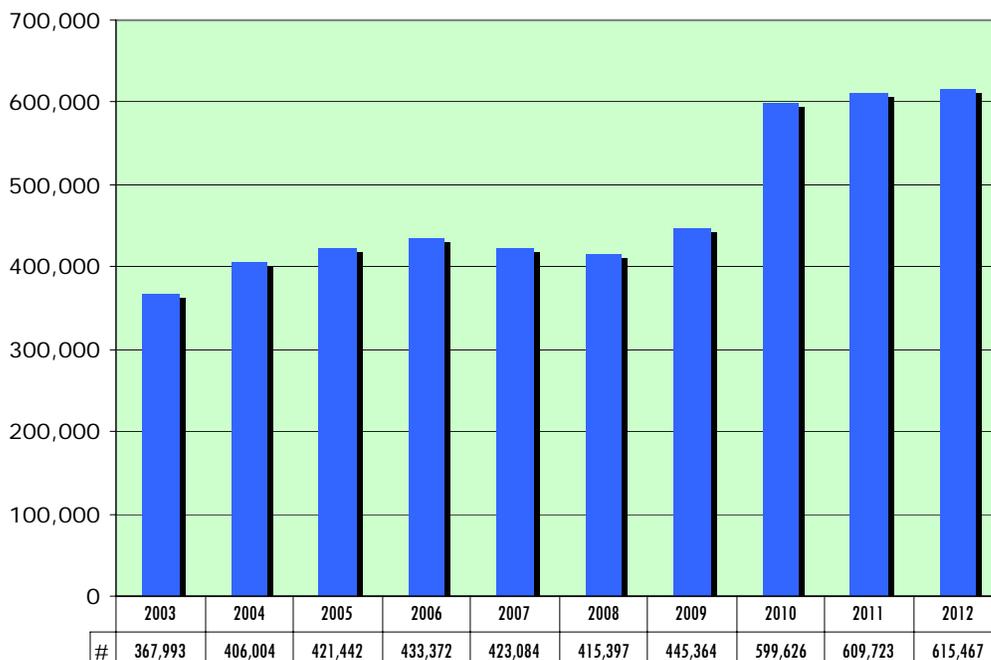
facts reflect a further widening in the ready-extreme disparity of wealth between the capitalist class and the working class over the past five years. The lack of response to these economic realities on the part of Democratic and Republican lawmakers will cause a family of four to lose up to \$36 of vital food assistance per month. The situation for struggling families in Oklahoma is particularly dire, and the timing of this decrease of food aid couldn't be worse. According to a report published on October 31 in the *Tulsa World*, 17 percent of Oklahomans rely on food stamps, and the numbers continue to

grow with recent figures setting all-time highs. In September of this year, 637,434 Oklahomans used food stamps, an increase of 8,476 from August. A full 45 percent of those are children, and a further 7 percent are elderly. Mark Beutler of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services summed up the situation to Ginnie Graham of the *Tulsa World*, saying, "We have known for some time the increased benefits that were put into place back in 2009 were set to expire. But it still comes at a time when many Oklahomans are struggling to put food on the table." He elaborated, "In spite of the economic recovery, Oklahoma is still seeing record

numbers of people receiving SNAP benefits. More than 40 percent of all recipients who receive SNAP are working but are apparently not earning a high enough wage to put food on the table." Again, the "economic recovery" of which Beutler speaks is, in effect, only a recovery for the capitalist class. The working class continues to see decreases real wages. This trend is not new, but has only accelerated since 2009. The chart here shows data on average monthly recipients of SNAP aid in Oklahoma per fiscal year, from 2003 to the 2012.

In Washington, both Democrats and Republicans seek to decrease funding for SNAP in an upcoming farm bill that is currently under negotiation. The two parties differ only on the amount. In the short term, charities and food banks are attempting to step ...

Average Monthly Food Stamp Recipients in Oklahoma



Source: Oklahoma Department of Human Services (listed by state fiscal year, 2003 - 2012)

Continued on Page 2

Report: State lawmakers enable wage theft, child labor

reprinted from *People's World*

By Mark Gruenberg

WASHINGTON — Corporate interests, led by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and including the National Association of Manufacturers and the Chamber of Commerce and retailers' groups, have undertaken — and continue to undertake — a wide-ranging attack on workers, union and non-union, a new Economic Policy Institute report and a panel discussing it says.

The corporate campaign amounts to “a broad, ambitious attempt to fundamentally affect the ability to

make a living in America,” said EPI economist Ross Eisenbrey during the Oct. 31 discussion of *The Legislative Attack On American Wages And Labor Standards, 2011-2012*. The 100-page report is on EPI's website. YouTube has a video of the discussion.

The right wingers target state legislatures, the panel explained, because state lawmakers are often part-time, and short-staffed. They're also easy to elect: The typical state legislative campaign costs \$50,000 or so, they said. Virtually all the states where ALEC and its allies are pushing their agenda are totally GOP-run.

In state capitals, the right wingers receive model legislation word for word from ALEC. They also face little opposition at the state level, except from organized labor. Some 2,000 state legislators nationwide, including the state House speakers in Michigan and Virginia, are ALEC members, the panel noted.

“We don't have a staff, so we don't know what we don't know,” leaving state lawmakers at the mercy of the coalition, said another panelist, State Rep. Patrick Hope, D-Va.

To add insult to injury, ALEC has found ways to wine and dine its lawmaker members without having to spend a penny. Virginia lawmakers, for example, travelled to lavish corporate-selected locations where they were wined and dined by lobbyists and business barons courtesy of a \$230,000 tab picked up by Old Dominion taxpayers. That pattern is repeated in other states, too.

The lack of staff and support at the state level is a big reason for the success of the coalition's vicious attacks against public worker unions, added the report's author, University of Oregon professor Gordon Lafer. The coalition poses as allies of private-sector workers, especially non-union workers, “but

they do little for them,” Lafer said.

Taken individually, the measures the corporate coalition pushes against all workers are bad enough. But when you step back and look at them as a whole, the picture is even worse, both the panelists and the report say.

In 2011-12, the report adds, four states passed bills lowering their minimum wages, 16 states cut unemployment insurance benefits, four expanded the use of child labor — Idaho now lets kids aged 12 work as school janitors — and 10 restricted the right of their own voters to approve paid sick leave and other measures.



Unionists were also particular targets, the report adds: Fifteen states restricted public workers' collective bargaining rights, dues collection, or both. Other states banned project labor agreements. Lawmakers introduced so-called “right to work” bills in 19 states, enacting them in GOP-run Michigan and Indiana. And GOP-run state governments banned local prevailing wage laws in Arizona, Idaho, Iowa and Louisiana.

“Each of these is an explicit goal of the lobbies — the

Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, the National Restaurant Association, the National Federation of Independent Business and others” that back and fund the ALEC-led coalition, Eisenbrey said. “These are the most powerful lobbies in the country and we should expect even more of this.”

Besides trying to weaken and kill organized labor, their leading foes, the corporate coalition also schemes to prevent voters from overturning its fiats. Knowing polls show pro-worker measures would pass if put to popular vote, they restrict the right to vote, both by enacting “voter ID” laws and by banning their own cities, towns and other political subdivisions from voting on various issues.

So when cities rebel — such as the 120 cities nationwide whose ordinances mandate higher minimum wages for firms that do business with the government — the corporate coalition responds with laws banning such future ordinances. The GOP-run Wisconsin government went further: It not only banned future local minimum wage hikes but it repealed Milwaukee's increase, which had won 63 percent of the vote, Lafer said.

The anti-worker coalition also fights against laws preventing wage theft. That's the tendency by employers in low-wage industries or in industries with many exploitable workers — such as construction, fast food and home health care — to not pay the minimum wage, not pay required overtime or, in many cases, not pay the workers at all.

Florida abolished its state Labor Department a decade ago and has no one to probe wage theft. Miami-Dade County responded with its own small claims court for such cases, which has handled 600 cases and recovered \$2 million. The GOP-run Florida legislature is trying to abolish the court, Eisenbrey, who told the story, said.

Food Stamps, continued from page 1

... up and fill in the gap, but their ability to do so remains extremely limited. Eileen Bradshaw of the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma says, “We know that for many families receiving SNAP benefits, they are already struggling. Now it'll mean they may have to come to our partner agencies or come more often to eat. So many of our partners are already stressed, with increases of 40 percent one year and then 60 percent the next. It's not leveling off or plateauing.”

The increasing disparity of wealth between capitalists and workers is a central and necessary feature of all capitalist societies. Welfare programs and charity initiatives can only temporarily address the problem by filling a few empty stomachs. Back in 2011 with the pamphlet *Who We Are and What We Stand For*, the Communist Party of Oklahoma made clear its position on the types of crises brought on by the defunding of government nutritional assistance programs: “We Communists do not advocate ‘giving a man a fish’; rather, we advocate teaching all working people how to fish *and how to keep the capitalist class from stealing the fish they catch.*”

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