

Rich Lindsay: Republican agenda does not benefit working families

By Rich Lindsay

Last month, I had the honor of standing on the steps of our state Capitol with over a thousand West Virginia union workers, in the driving snow, in protest of the Republicans' pursuit of the wholesale dismantling of our middle class. Republicans take this tack to the hard right at a time when our state government should do everything in its power to support and protect the working people of West Virginia — our greatest economic engine. Even worse, they have settled on a radical agenda, not as a consequence of popular support or need, but rather in an effort to settle old scores and satisfy out-of-state big business interests.

In the last election cycle, Republicans did not run on repealing prevailing wage, on right to work or on stripping health and safety regulations for our miners. If they did they would not hold the majorities that they hold today in our state Legislature. Instead, they ran in opposition to our president only, and now frivolously claim the appearance of progress.

But make no mistake. Their radical agenda has nothing to do with progress, supporting our working families and fostering an economy that works for everyone. Take right to work for example. Republicans have absurdly couched their position as “freedom of choice”, but in reality there is no choice at all for union and non-union workers alike. Because once you take away the bargaining power of union workers, which benefit non-union workers as well, an employer can reduce wages and benefits for all workers at his leisure, leaving no choice or recourse for any worker. As a consequence of right to work legislation, working families will have less money for daycare; less money for healthcare; and less money for their families' needs.

Even more obscene and difficult to comprehend, is the Republicans' pursuit of repealing safety regulations and legal recourse for our miners and their families. They are in effect checking off Don Blankenship's wish list by risking the lives of our miners and their families in effort to improve some out-of-state coal CEO's bottom line.

In contrast, Democrats have always stood beside the working people of West Virginia. Democrats increased the minimum wage in our state; Democrats kept our unemployment rate down during the recession; and Democrats are responsible for businesses like Proctor and Gamble relocating operations to our state.

The Republican opposition is fond of saying that government shouldn't pick winners or losers. Who do you think is winning?

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