



## Read 'em and rise up

**T**he cards have been laid on the table.

The events that unfolded in the dark of night in Madison, WI, on March 9 left no room for doubt or debate about what the agenda of Gov. Scott Walker and other political opportunists across this great country really is. It is about destroying unions.

The lie has truly been exposed.

The vote that was taken behind closed doors in Madison had absolutely nothing to do with the financial situation of the state or its budget. How could it, when the union-busting portion of the so-called budget repair bill “essential” to closing the state’s budget deficit was stripped from the budget bill and voted on separately? Similar initiatives have been introduced in Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, New Hampshire, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, Washington and Michigan. All in the name of budgets, right? Think again.

A war on the middle class has been waged, with the elimination of unions and collective-bargaining rights as the primary target.

It was sickening to watch the media coverage from Madison. The manner in which the bill was passed was shameful and undemocratic. I wanted to be there as it unfolded to pound on the doors of the state capitol along with our fellow brothers and sisters in protest.

**Just a few days earlier, hundreds of letter carriers from Illinois, Minnesota, South Dakota and Wisconsin had rallied on those very steps of the capitol where thousands of angry protestors swarmed when word got out of what was taking place.**

I was fortunate to be able to speak at that rally. It was an honor to bring a message of solidarity from the 290,000 members of the National Association of Letter Carriers and to express our support for our fellow public employees in Wisconsin. Their fight is our fight.

It was a poignant moment to be advocating for the right of the citizens of Wisconsin to maintain collective-bargaining rights in the very state where our union was born. We

were all standing on sacred ground as we pumped our fists in solidarity. And while we are all angry over what happened in Madison, the injustice that was done will serve a purpose.

How?

Because now the political opportunists, like Gov. Walker, have been exposed. They have shown us their cards and their agendas and we now see them for who they really are. They are the thugs.

This is not about state budgets in Wisconsin or Ohio or Indiana or Iowa. This is a calculated plan to eliminate unions, state by state by state. We must stand together with our fellow union members, not just because it is the right thing to do, but because we surely will be next.

**The injustice in Madison also has served to ignite the labor movement.** Unions have been unified around this fight from day one all across America. We must not and we will not back down. Our very survival is at stake. The existence of the middle class is at stake. Our futures and the futures of our children are at stake. The fundamental rights and freedoms of every worker in this country to organize and bargain collectively are at stake.

This will not stand.

As I said in my remarks in Madison, there is no greater force for fairness, dignity and democracy in the workplace than a union. There is no greater force for fairness, dignity and democracy in our country than the labor movement.

We have fought hard to win these rights and we cannot and must not let political opportunists take them away.

And while the battle was lost in Wisconsin, the war was not. This is not over. This is just the beginning. We will not be stopped by threats. We will not give up our voice. We will stand in solidarity.

This is a moment in history that will be defined by actions, not words. We have to fight this attack by protesting, by letter writing, by voting those who attack us out of office.

Folding is not an option. Rise up.

