



# MWRO People's Bulletin

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## Water Affordability petitioners hit the streets and bus stops

People have hit the streets to gather signatures for the Water Affordability Plan advisory petition. Dozens of Detroiters are working their neighborhoods to meet the May 31 deadline. Here are a few of their stories.



Ann Grimmatt

"I collected signatures at the bus stops downtown – Capitol Park, Grand Circus Park. Many bus drivers allowed me to post non-political literature on the bus; some let me address the whole bus. As soon as I start talking, people listen and the audience grows, and I can quickly fill a page.

So far I have collected 6 pages." — Ann Grimmatt

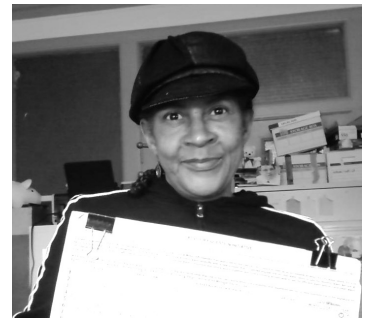
"I collected signatures at Patton and Lipke Detroit Recreation Centers among the 50 and over basketball players. While some were not registered in Detroit, all those who were, signed up. I got a full page of signatures. Some of the Recreation Center supervisors said that I couldn't be on the premises, but the players took the clipboard and signed it anyway." – Joe Green



Joe Green

"The first day it was warm a lot of my neighbors gathered in the park across the street. I went out and talked to them about the water affordability petition. I handed out the blue flyer of facts and information. A few people the first day signed. The next day was warmer and more people

came out and they started looking for me. People had taken the flyers home and more people came out and signed the petition. I got three sheets full in two days." — Gwen Gaines



Gwen Gaines



Quintin Williams

"On my daily bus rides from home, I asked other riders to sign the petition. I explained to them about the water problems of Michigan and Detroit. Some were reluctant to sign because they thought I was getting paid for signatures. Many were willing to sign to help the community. I filled 8 sheets in 10 days of bus rides." – Quintin Williams

When this initiative passes next November, it will be a powerful weapon to force the city to cut water rates and keep the water on for us. □

### Next steps in the campaign

May 5 — Election Day — Ask a friend to go with you to the polls and collect signatures

May 6 - 9 — Turn in signatures, MWRO Office, Central United Methodist Church, 23 E. Adams

May 11, 5 pm — Meeting of the Utilities Committee — MWRO Office

May 26 — Memorial Day — Ask a friend to go with you and collect signatures at events

## 'Cipients Speak!

# What is to be done?

By M.D. Taylor, chairperson  
Michigan Welfare Rights Org.

Many cities across the country are experiencing economic declines like Detroit is going through, but we have the distinction of being "first" on many painful lists. We are in the top five in housing foreclosures, in unemployment, in tax foreclosures, in infant mortality rates, in school closures, in dropout rates, etc.

Some things, however, you can't make up. Highland Park, Michigan, was one of the most beautiful small cities located entirely within the boundaries of Detroit. The trees stretched across the streets to touch each other, providing shade in the summer and giving all residents a panoramic winter view of deep and lasting beauty that all of us enjoyed. Along the edge of Highland Park was one of the Chrysler auto plants that employed thousands. It gave both a solid standard of living and a tax base that helped operate the local government.

Chrysler moved to upscale Auburn Hills, Michigan and took that tax base with them. The decline in Highland Park started. The population dwindled from a high of 66,000 residents to less than 16,000 today. Tough times in H.P.

Knowing this history, knowing about the thousands who lost their jobs, knowing that water was disconnected because residents couldn't pay the rising costs, a series of no-vision politi-



cians vied for elected seats until the juice ran out. A disappointing Governor Jennifer Granholm, not allowing H.P. to declare bankruptcy on her watch, instead appointed a financial manager who took the place of an elected body. The first pirate crew was lead by a now defunct Ramona Pearson & Associates who were dismissed after some 20 months. They took more than \$1 million out of Highland Park in salaries. No improvements were made to turn the crisis around during that reign of terror. They only benefited themselves at the people's expense. Now we come to this.

Native son Arthur Blackwell shed tears when he was appointed to serve as the next Financial Manager of cash-strapped Highland Park in 2007. He was so touched by this appointment, and declared his love for the city that raised him & his family. The "HONOR" was so great, he vowed

to work for \$1.00 a year. After a series of FOI's (Freedom of Information) requests were filed, we find that he collected since 2007, **\$495,000.00**. Of course, he has an explanation for this, suggesting that it may only be an accounting error, plus noting that he has written back to the City \$66,000 that he may have collected unwittingly. He was fired two days ago, and now Financial Manager #3 from an upscale community has been appointed. Wonder how this is going to turn out?

Just losing his job is not enough. Blackwell should be the focus of a citizen's arrest, and taken from his nice home kicking and screaming and off to jail where we decide how long he should stay there after stealing from poor people. Class war continues. Who pays for destroying the lives of working people? No one! April 19, 2009 ☐

# Plan of Action of the National Welfare Rights Union

## **1. A Guaranteed Annual Income and Nationalization of the Food Industries**

All residents of the U.S. will be eligible for a guaranteed annual income to protect them from falling below the poverty level. In addition, all food industries should be nationalized to control costs and ensure that families will always have nutritious and adequate amounts of food to feed their families.

## **2. Universal Health Care with a Single-Payee**

All residents will be eligible for a single-payee health care system funded by the federal government. We oppose private insurance that profits off of the medical conditions of low-income, uninsured people

## **3. Nationalization of Child Care**

All children should be eligible for free, quality child care. We also support a living wage for child care providers.

## **4. Nationalization of Education, Including the Headstart Program**

All residents will be entitled to education from birth to death. The Headstart Program must be preserved, funding must be increased, and eligibility should be expanded.

## **5. Nationalization of Utilities**

All utilities including electricity, natural gas, heating fuels, water, alternative energy, and communications should be properties of the public domain and not subject to privatization. All forms of communication, such as telephones and Internet access should be included.

## **6. Nationalization of Housing**

Everyone has a right to a home. It is the duty of the government to provide affordable housing for all residents, and provide periodic maintenance and upgrades. We recommend a permanent moratorium on the demolition of public housing.

## **7. Nationalization of Public Mass Transit**

All forms of mass, rapid transit should be fully accessible (including to those with physical disabilities,) and affordable to all residents in communities across the country. Routes must include access to major transportation hubs with connecting routes in small and large communities.

## **8. Troop Withdrawal from Iraq, Afghanistan, and No New Deployments**

The Iraq and Afghanistan wars have depleted the American economy with no end in sight. Poor people have disproportionately suffered from the last eight years of these costly deployments physically, emotionally, and financially.

**THE NEXT EIGHT YEARS SHOULD FOCUS ON METHODS OF PEACE, AND FUNDS SHOULD BE REDIRECTED TOWARD THE ELIMINATION OF POVERTY.**

*The National Welfare Rights Union is the union for low-income persons and public assistance recipients in the United States of North America. Following the National Welfare Rights Organization, the NWRU was reorganized in 1987 to represent the interests of low-income people, and to continue the work to eliminate poverty. The NWRU has chapters across the U.S. and affiliations with other anti-poverty groups outside the boundaries of the nation.*

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# Rev. Pinkney and Diane Bukowski — fighters for the people



Rev. Pinkney shows tether and monitor.

On June 9, Rev. Edward Pinkney will face a judge in Grand Rapids. This is a victory. The movement has won Pinkney the right to a trial on his appeal. The jury in Diane Bukowski's case is

meeting to determine her fate on two felony counts.

Both Pinkney and Bukowski are social justice fighters, not criminals. Both were engaged in fighting for the people when they were arrested. Rev. Pinkney organized a successful recall campaign in Benton Harbor and for this service he has been convicted of felonies and tethered. Diane Bukowski, a reporter for the

*Michigan Citizen*, followed police engaged in a high-speed chase; a young man was killed. As she gathered information to inform the community of the police's crime, she was charged with resisting arrest.

Do not forget them! They fight for you!

Pinkney's trial is June 9. Buses leave from Detroit, Ann Arbor and Chicago. Tickets from Detroit are \$30/person. Call 313-964-0618.

To support Diane Bukowski, call the office for updates. □

Diane Bukowski arrested.



## Did you know? . . . Information for People With Disabilities

By Quintin Williams

There is a big problem for People With a Disability (PWD). They face many barriers every day to improve their quality of life. MWRO advocates for PWDs for housing and healthcare and we welcome new members.

There are several laws that enforce and help enforce the rights of PWDs. The best known is the Americans with Disability Act (ADA).

But there is also the Air Carrier Access Act to help people who fly. The Rehabilitation Act states that rehabilitated commer-

cial buildings must comply with ADA. So the Wayne County Airport Authority Detroit Metro Airport must comply with equal access for PWD at both of its terminals, both of which have been built recently. Go to:

[www.metroairport.com/TravelersSpecialNeeds/](http://www.metroairport.com/TravelersSpecialNeeds/)

PWDs who drive can get assistance pumping gas by accessing [www.thepumpguide.com](http://www.thepumpguide.com) that has a list of 800 stations throughout Michigan.

MWRO will include information in our newsletter for PWDs.

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS! STATE EMERGENCY RELIEF (SER)

This program provides limited assistance to individuals and families facing emergencies that threaten their health or safety.

ANYONE can apply for SER, not just those who receive other assistance from the Department of Human Services (DHS). One of the services available is: Home Ownership Services.

Home Ownership Services may help prevent loss of a home, providing services such as:

- House payments (mortgage or land contract payments), including principal, interest, legal fees and escrow for taxes and insurance;
- Property taxes and fees;
- Mobile home lot rent for owners or purchasers of mobile homes;
- Insurance coverage required by a mortgage or land contract.

DHS will pay up to \$2,000 towards Home Ownership Services. The lifetime maximum is the combined total of all home ownership service payments given to the client. Home Ownership Services cannot be approved if the emergency was client-caused. The total amount of taxes past due for all years cannot exceed \$2,000.

A client-caused emergency is when an SER group fails to pay required payments for the six-month period prior to the month of application. Good cause may exist (except for property taxes) as a basis for an applicant's failure to prevent an emergency. Some mortgage companies are willing to accept the DHS payment and enter into a suitable payment plan with the client. □