

# Faith WORKS



Newsletter of Interfaith Worker Justice

Fall 2012

## Report Exposes Dirt in Car Wash Industry

IWJ and the affiliated worker center network congratulate ARISE Chicago for the release of the first ever comprehensive study of working conditions in Chicago's car wash industry.

The report, *Clean Cars, Dirty Work: Worker Rights Violations in Chicago Car Washes*, reveals how employers across the industry violate minimum wage and overtime laws. The report also exposes an industry fraught with health and safety violations.

ARISE Chicago tied the report's release to the launch of a large-scale campaign to organize car wash workers across the city with the United Steel Workers. To download the report and for more information about the campaign visit [www.arisechicago.org](http://www.arisechicago.org).



ARISE Chicago released the comprehensive report on Chicago's car wash industry to a full house of workers, worker advocates and allies.

 /interfaithworkerjustice

 @iwjnational

 /iwjnational

**Interfaith**  
  
**Worker Justice**

1020 W. Bryn Mawr Ave., 4th Fl.  
Chicago, IL 60660

(773) 728-8400 • [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org)

## Celebrating Wage Theft Wins

Workers, worker advocates and community groups are making headway in the often slow but steady uphill battle against wage theft. This year, affiliates helped pass at least three new anti-wage theft ordinances, and build up several other campaigns in communities across the country.

### BROWARD COUNTY

Taking its cue from neighboring Miami-Dade, Broward County recently passed the Wage Recovery Ordinance, which creates a resource for thousands of wage theft victims who previously had nowhere to turn. Broward is the second county in Florida to implement a wage recovery program despite strong opposition from business groups. Workers and worker advocates led by the Florida Wage Theft Task Force, which includes IWJ affiliate, South Florida Interfaith Worker Justice, were instrumental in getting the Broward County ordinance passed.

### ARKANSAS

Members of the Arkansas legislature are expected to introduce a statewide wage theft prevention bill in the spring. If passed, the law would

limit wage deductions an employer can make and it would also require employers to pay all employees by the next regular payday following termination or departure.

The Northwest Arkansas Worker Justice Center is leading the campaign against wage theft in Arkansas, and helped craft the language for statewide wage theft prevention law.

### HOUSTON

The Down With Wage Theft Campaign, led by IWJ affiliate, Fe y Justicia Worker Center, continues to gain momentum and support from groups around the city. The campaign, launched in March this year, is pushing the passage of a Wage Theft Ordinance that provides for an administrative hearing process of wage theft cases through Houston's Office of Business Opportunities. It would also ban companies found guilty of wage theft from securing city contracts, business licenses and permits needed to continue operating in the city. For more information visit [www.downwithwagetheft.org](http://www.downwithwagetheft.org).

### MEMPHIS

The Workers Interfaith Network is leading efforts to get a wage theft ordinance in place to protect Mem-

phis workers. If passed the ordinance will make it easier for wage theft victims to reclaim lost or stolen wages. For more information and updates on the Memphis ordinance visit [www.workersinterfaithnetwork.org](http://www.workersinterfaithnetwork.org).

### GRAND RAPIDS

The Grand Rapids City Commission recently passed a wage theft proposal put forward by workers and faith and community leaders led by IWJ ally, the Micah Center. The new regulations tie anti-wage theft measures to city contracts and set up standards to make sure city contractors do not steal wages. With the regulations in place, businesses engaging in wage theft will be disqualified from city contracts, and contractors found to commit wage theft will not receive payment until workers are properly compensated. Find more information at [www.themicahcenter.org](http://www.themicahcenter.org).

Other cities, states and municipalities considering similar wage theft campaigns are: Palm Beach County, Fla., Denver, Iowa, New Jersey, Phoenix, Portland, Maine, and San Diego. Visit [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org) for updates on local and national wage theft campaigns.

## A Growing Network

The IWJ Worker Center Network welcomes two new centers in Dallas and Nashville.

The new Dallas office is the first satellite office of the Workers Defense Project (WDP). WDP has been serving low wage workers in Austin for 10 years, and has recovered nearly \$1 million in unpaid wages. WDP plans to work with construction workers in Dallas.

Since its inception in 2009, newly-affiliated Workers Dignity Project (WDP) in Nashville has racked up an impressive record of victories, including winning more than \$60,000 in back wages and compensation for low wage workers.

The Network continues to receive requests for assistance in building new worker centers across the country.

## Trained & Inspired

Organizers from around the country gathered in Chicago in October for IWJ's Organizing for Worker Justice training. The weeklong program was designed to help develop participants' organizing skills and provide practical communication, fundraising and administrative tools. It also provided a venue for organizers to exchange ideas and share best practices. For more information about IWJ training programs, visit [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org).



## IWJ Board

President: The Rev. Darren Cushman Wood  
Vice-President: Ms. Ros Pelles  
Finance Chair: Mr. John Howard  
Fundraising Chair: Mr. Jules Bernstein  
Public Policy Chair: Dr. Edith Rasell  
Board Development Chair: Ms. Kathy Saile

Dr. Charles Amjad-Ali  
Mr. Hussam Ayloush  
Ms. Arlene Holt Baker  
Imam Naeem Baig  
Mr. Steven Birnbaum  
Rabbi Laurie Coskey  
Mr. Tom Costanza  
Mr. Phil Cubeta  
The Rev. Dr. Lillian Daniel  
Imam Taha Hassane  
Mr. John Hill  
The Rev. Daryl Ingram  
The Rev. Troy Jackson  
Rabbi Jill Jacobs  
The Rev. Chris Johnson  
The Rev. Dr. Ken Brooker Langston  
Ms. Susan Leslie  
The Rev. Dr. Leonard Lovett  
Dr. Joseph A. McCartin  
The Rev. Aaron McEmrys  
Mr. Todd O'Malley  
Sr. Mary Prinski, OP  
The Rev. Frank Raines III  
Ms. Elena Segura  
The Rev. Jim Sessions  
The Rev. Dr. Paul Sherry  
The Rev. Bill Somplatsky-Jarman  
The Rev. Bennie Whiten Jr.  
The Rev. David Wildman

### Special Advisors

Bishop Jesse DeWitt\*  
The Rev. Jim Lawson  
The Rev. Joseph Echols Lowery  
Rabbi Robert Marx\*  
\* Former Board President

### Labor Advisory Board

Tim Beaty, Teamsters  
Tom Chabolla, SEIU  
Alan Freeman, IBEW  
James Gibbs, UMWA  
The Rev. Clete Kiley, UNITE HERE  
Charles Lester, ATU  
Esther Lopez, UFCW  
Donna McDaniel, LIUNA  
Roselyn Pelles, AFL-CIO  
Fred Redmond, United Steelworkers  
Foster Stringer, AFT  
Kenneth Zinn, National Nurses United

For detailed Board and Staff information visit: [www.iwj.org/about/board](http://www.iwj.org/about/board) or [www.iwj.org/about/staff](http://www.iwj.org/about/staff)

Faith Works is produced by IWJ's Communications Department. For questions, corrections and story suggestions contact Communications Director, Cathy Junia, at 773-728-8400 x 40 or email [cjunia@iwj.org](mailto:cjunia@iwj.org).

Stay Updated. Scan the code below or sign up here <http://bit.ly/iwjupdates>



# Poverty Wages Hurt; Time to Raise the Wage

By the Rev. Michael Livingston

**"What does the Lord require of us but to do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God." (Micah 6:8)**

With 12.1 million people unemployed and one in six Americans living in poverty, we should all agree that we need more good paying jobs that allow workers to support their families.

Raising the minimum wage is essential to our economic recovery. These days, far too many workers have become expendable and undervalued, easily replaced and exploited

in a system that places all power in the hands of the employer. CEO's of the companies employing the most low wage workers in the nation make an average of 9.4 million dollars a year – that's 450 times more than a worker making ten dollars an hour.

The federal poverty level is \$22,000 for a family of four. Income at twice that level is hardly enough to sustain a family. Minimum wage at \$7.25 an hour is 40 percent below the federal poverty level. In other words, if you make the legislated minimum wage, and even up to 40 percent above it – we guarantee you will live in poverty. This is immoral.

The system is unethical by design.

Interfaith Worker Justice and allies around the country are advocating for a raise in the federal minimum wage. IWJ, through its affiliates, supports statewide minimum wage campaigns in New York, Illinois, Maine, California, Missouri, Massachusetts, and Maryland. Although much of the local work has slowed down with the elections, IWJ is committed to keeping the minimum wage issue on the national radar.

Join the movement to raise the minimum wage – in your state and in the nation. Visit [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org) to learn more.

## I've Seen How Hyatt Hurts

By Sung Yeon Choi-Morrow

A couple of months ago I spent time with some Hyatt employees on the job. I was already familiar with the campaign after having helped organize a big day of rallies at various Hyatt hotels in downtown Chicago in 2011. I understood why the campaign was so important to the worker movement and our fight against corporate greed. But actually spending time with Hyatt employees made the horrors of their daily work lives even more real to me.

During my short visit, I noticed that most of the housekeepers had bandages wrapped around swollen wrists. It turns out many of them suffer from carpal tunnel syndrome; some have even undergone surgery. They told me it was from lifting the heavy mattresses. I also noticed some women wearing back braces. You'd think they worked in warehouses moving heavy boxes – well, they might as well be with mattresses weighing anywhere from 80 to 100 lbs.

Hyatt housekeepers clean as many as 30 rooms per day, almost double the number of rooms union-hotel workers have to clean.

We in the religious community have the capacity to positively impact the lives of Hyatt workers. We love to conference, and sometimes our conferences are at Hyatt hotels. We all need to take responsibility, research and engage in conversations with our organizations and use



People of faith gather outside a Hyatt hotel in Chicago in support of hotel workers demanding better wages and treatment on the job.

our consumer power to leverage for Hyatt workers. Can we all work together to ensure that our respective religious organizations don't support worker abuse at Hyatt hotels? For more information about the campaign you can visit: [www.hyatthurts.org](http://www.hyatthurts.org) If you want more information on how to ensure fair labor practices in your hotel contracts, please visit our website: [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org) for more information.

## Health and Safety Training: Three Times a Charm

IWJ is excited to announce another year of health and safety trainings, thanks to funding from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Susan Harwood Training Grant Program.

Over the last two years, IWJ and its affiliates trained more than 2,000 trainers and workers in health and safety measures in the following sectors: construction, cleaning, poultry and meat packing, restaurants, landscaping, and home care. Of those sectors, construction has the highest mortalities; meatpacking has the most injuries. IWJ recently developed a "Training the Trainers" program that provides workers in those sectors the tools and resources necessary to train their co-workers on their workplace rights.

More on IWJ's health and safety trainings at: [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org).



IWJ Health and Safety Organizer Maria Gutierrez leads train-the-trainer sessions for affiliates and other worker advocates. Funding from OSHA will allow IWJ to develop more training modules on worker safety.

# Black Friday Prayers and Actions for Walmart Workers

For the first time in the history of organizing at Walmart, store associates are walking out of the job to demand decent pay, basic benefits and respect. Warehouse workers and others in the Walmart supply chain are also holding the retail giant accountable for poor conditions at their sites. With growing support from faith and community groups and other allies, workers at Walmart stores and associated warehouses might see the change for which they've been fighting.

IWJ is mobilizing religious and community support for workers who are making change at Walmart. On Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, people of faith will join thousands of store associates, warehouse workers and other supporters in calling for change at Walmart. Work stoppages, prayer vigils, flash mobs and delegations to store managers are planned. Everyone is encouraged to participate in or organize actions at



Photo credit: OURWalmart

*OURWalmart members risk their livelihood to create real change at the nation's largest retail employer.*

their local Walmart stores. For more information contact IWJ National Organizer Sung Yeon Choi-Morrow at [schoi-morrow@iwj.org](mailto:schoi-morrow@iwj.org). Resources are available at [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org).

## Chaplaincy Program

This year, IWJ also launched a Walmart chaplaincy program, which nurtures and trains store workers – who identify themselves as people of faith – to serve as internal workplace chaplains who can support and encourage the leadership and courage of their co-workers. The program was piloted in Seattle and has since been expanded to some Los Angeles and Dallas stores. For more information on the program, email [info@iwj.org](mailto:info@iwj.org).

## Why Call for Jubilee at Walmart?

*Excerpts from the Rev. Dr. Walter Brueggemann*

The Jubilee Year is authorized by Moses in Leviticus 25. It is celebrated in lyrical fashion in Isaiah 61 as “the year of the Lord’s favor” (Isaiah 61:2). It is claimed by Jesus as the shape of his life and destiny of his ministry:

Today this scripture [Isaiah 61:1-2] has been fulfilled in your hearing (Luke 4:21).

The biblical provision for the jubilee year proposes a pause in the rough and tumble of real-life economics. It knows that through predatory action in the economy, some gain at the expense of others and some lose because of their vulnerability, and huge social inequities result. In order to curb such unsustainable economic arrangements, the jubilee year provides a regularized occasion when economic property and livelihood is given back by those who have gained to those who have lost.

Given that the Jubilee in biblical provision occurs every fifty years,

the 50th anniversary of Walmart is a splendid occasion for a Jubilee Year among us. Thus it is here proposed that on its 50th anniversary, Walmart pauses in its rough and tumble of economics to give back for the sake of the neighborhood. Such give back may take many forms: give back to the neighborhoods that the stores tend to diminish. Give back to the workers who stay locked into poverty by poor wages, give back hope to those locked into despairing economics. It would be an act of neighborly generosity that would bring health and well-being to the neighborhood to the benefit of all parties.

The term “jubilee” comes from the Hebrew term *ybl*, “ram’s horn.” The Jubilee Year begins when the ram’s horn is blown. We can listen for it in Walmart stores all across the nation. When it sounds, the neighborhood will dance and sing!

*Full text available at [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org)*

## My Summer Organizing Clergy

*By Kyra Brown*

Although I have been a community organizer since high school, I spent this summer organizing a group that I had not given much thought to “organizing” before: clergy. Having just completed my first year of seminary, I was ecstatic to be offered an internship with Interfaith Worker Justice.

I was tasked to plan a prayer breakfast, which would provide at least thirty leaders across faith traditions the opportunity to network with one another and learn about the workplace injustices facing food service and hotel workers in the Baltimore area. While I learned that I have a passion for organizing clergy, I also became painfully aware that not all clergy might choose to support these kinds of efforts. For instance, one religious leader said that while he commended our efforts to work with the church in improving economic conditions in America, he found our methods and goals divisive.

His response was a little disheartening, at first. But his logic seemed all too familiar. In Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter

from a Birmingham Jail”, written on April 16, 1963, to clergy. King writes: “we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive.”

At that moment, I realized that I must be on the right path. By the same token, we (community organizer and leaders) still have work to do!

I submit that while economic justice issues can be “divisive” that is not the goal of those raising awareness around such matters. As a society, we must get to a place where we are as critical of the systems which perpetuate oppression as we are of the prophets who bring to light such oppression.

The Biblical mandate to promote justice should outweigh any potential political dispute. IWJ is following the mandate of Isaiah 1:17: “Learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.”

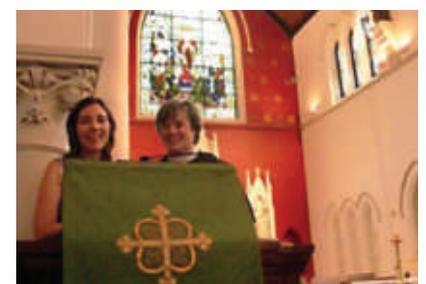
Visit [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org) for more information on IWJ’s summer internship programs and for Kyra’s full reflection.



*In Chicago, IWJ interns spent the summer helping organize faith communities in support of Hyatt and Walmart workers. Photo taken at a Hyatt action.*

## Labor Day Programs a Success!

More than 400 congregations around the country participated in this year’s Labor in the Pulpits/on the Bimah/in the Minbar program. A signature program of IWJ, LiP/B/M gives congregations the opportunity and the tools to lift up issues impacting workers, and to get to know the workers, worker leaders and advocates within their community. This year, workers and advocates talked about wage theft, the right to organize, health and safety, unemployment and underemployment, among other things. For sermons and sample reflections, and to learn more about the program, visit [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org).



*IWJ Deputy Director Aina Gutierrez (left) in the pulpit at St. Mark’s with Rector Rev. Debra Bullock on the Sunday before Labor Day*



1020 W. Bryn Mawr Ave., 4th Fl.  
Chicago, IL 60660

(773) 728-8400 • www.iwj.org



# JUST Saying

A Message from IWJ Executive Director Kim Bobo

In September, I spent a few days in North Carolina talking with folks about wage theft. Having written a book on wage theft, I've heard hundreds of stories about employers stealing wages from their workers. Nonetheless, I was again overwhelmed and shocked at the meanness and brazenness of some employers. I met:

- A university employee who was "misclassified" as an independent contractor for more than ten years, denied employer side of payroll taxes, overtime pay, unemployment, workers compensation and the benefits offered to other university employees such as sick days and vacation days. Every time he complained, nothing happened.
- A country club employee who served at banquets but never saw the 20 percent service fee the club charged to the banquet parties and instead was only paid minimum wage.
- A worker at a golf club who never received her tips.
- A young man who (at age 15) worked 78 hours his first week at a Dunkin Donuts and received above minimum wage for 40 hours (but not nearly what minimum wage plus overtime would have been). When he asked about the payment, he was told he should take what he was offered or find another job.
- A firefighter who works 168 hours per four-week shift, but is only paid for 160 because the city pays in four, forty-hour payments.
- A woman who sells products to nail salons and knows that all the workers are paid as independent contractors.

In addition to the folks I met directly, I heard about:

- Media engineers who aren't allowed to report all their hours.
- An employer who deducted from his workers' paychecks the cost of his birthday party.

Every time I think I've heard it all, I hear a story like the employer deducting from paychecks for his birthday party. Really?

If you're not sure about the extent of the crisis of wage theft, start talking to workers. Talk to young people and you'll hear about it because they work in restaurants and retail places notorious for wage theft. Talk to your neighbors and family members. I suspect, like me, you will be shocked and saddened.

We need to do more as a society, which is why I'm so pleased with the terrific local wage theft campaigns many IWJ affiliates are leading across the nation. These campaigns strengthen enforcement and they broaden awareness of the issue and expand the advocates for worker justice.

Check out [http://bit.ly/wagetheft\\_iwj](http://bit.ly/wagetheft_iwj) to learn more about local wage theft campaigns.

If you want to raise awareness about wage theft in your community, offer a workshop using the IWJ Wage Theft PowerPoint. Download a FREE copy from [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org).

Wage theft is all around us, but is a crime we can stop with our work together.



## Let's Build a Stronger Movement for Worker Justice TOGETHER!

Your support helps provide IWJ with the resources to expand and strengthen its network of affiliated worker centers and interfaith groups that provide critical, on-the-ground support to many of our nation's low wage workers. PLEASE MAKE YOUR YEAR-END CONTRIBUTION TODAY at <http://bit.ly/Faithworks2012>.

Together, we can step up the campaign to end wage theft, push for a living wage and promote safe and healthy workplaces for all. If you haven't already, please donate now, and together we'll do good work in 2013. Mail check donations to Interfaith Worker Justice, 1020 W. Bryn Mawr Ave., Chicago, IL 60660

A list of IWJ's 2011 supporters is available at [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org).



## IWJ Affiliates

Arkansas Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice – Little Rock, AR  
Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE)—California – Oakland, CA  
CLUE—LA – Los Angeles, CA  
East Bay Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice – Oakland, CA  
Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice in San Diego – San Diego, CA  
Interfaith Council on Economics and Justice – San Jose, CA  
Sonoma Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice – Santa Rosa, CA  
IWJ-Colorado/FRESC for Good Jobs and Strong Communities – Denver, CO  
Connecticut Center for a New Economy-New Haven – New Haven, CT  
Connecticut Center for a New Economy-Hartford – Hartford, CT  
D.C. Jobs with Justice—Interfaith Worker Justice of Greater Washington – Washington, DC  
Interfaith Action of Southwest Florida – Immokalee, FL  
South Florida Interfaith Worker Justice – Miami, FL  
Georgia Poultry Alliance – Atlanta, GA  
Interfaith Worker Justice, Atlanta – Atlanta, GA  
DuPage Interfaith Worker Justice – Naperville, IL  
Arise Chicago – Chicago, IL  
Community, Faith and Labor Coalition – Indianapolis, IN  
Interfaith Committee on Work & Community – Bloomington, IN  
Calumet Project – Hammond, IN  
St. Joseph Valley Project – South Bend, IN  
Interfaith Worker Justice of Kansas – Wichita, KS  
Interfaith Worker Justice—NOLA – New Orleans, LA

Interfaith Worker Justice Southern Maine – Portland, ME  
Massachusetts Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice – Boston, MA  
Interfaith Worker Justice—Metro Detroit – Oak Park, MI  
Workers Interfaith Network – Minneapolis, MN  
Interfaith Worker Justice—Greater Kansas City – Kansas City, MO  
Interfaith Worker Justice of Nebraska – Omaha, NE  
Interfaith Worker Justice—New Mexico – Santa Fe, NM  
Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition – New York, NY  
Capital District Labor-Religion Coalition – Albany, NY  
Central New York Labor-Religion Coalition – East Syracuse, NY  
Labor-Religion Coalition – Latham, NY  
Beloved Community Center – Greensboro, NC  
Cincinnati Interfaith Committee on Worker Justice – Cincinnati, OH  
Greater Columbus Jobs with Justice – Columbus, OH  
Toledo Area Jobs with Justice – Toledo, OH  
Central Oklahoma Community Forum – Oklahoma City, OK  
Eastern Oklahoma Labor Religion Council – Tulsa, OK  
Religious Outreach Committee/Portland Jobs with Justice – Portland, OR  
Springfield Solidarity Network/Jobs with Justice – Eugene, OR  
Labor-Religion Coalition of Western Pennsylvania – Pittsburgh, PA  
Philadelphia Area Jobs with Justice – Philadelphia, PA  
Interfaith Worker Justice of East Tennessee – Knoxville, TN  
Middle Tennessee Jobs with Justice –

Murfreesboro, TN  
Workers Interfaith Network – Memphis, TN  
O.U.R. Vanderbilt – Nashville, TN  
Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy – Richmond, VA  
Faith Community for Worker Justice – Milwaukee, WI  
Interfaith Coalition for Worker Justice of South Central Wisconsin – Madison, WI

### Worker Centers

Arizona Interfaith Alliance for Worker Justice – Phoenix, AZ  
Southside Workers Center – Tucson, AZ  
Northwest Arkansas Workers Justice Center – Springdale, AR  
Pilipino Workers Center – Los Angeles, CA  
Young Workers United – San Francisco, CA  
South Florida Interfaith Worker Justice – Miami, FL  
Economic Justice Coalition – Athens, GA  
ARISE Chicago – Chicago, IL  
Easter Maine Workers' Center/Food AND Medicine – Brewer, ME  
Southern Maine Worker Center – Portland, ME

MassCOSH – Dorchester, MA  
Michigan Organizing Project (Kalamazoo) – Kalamazoo, MI  
Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha – Minneapolis, MN  
New Labor – New Brunswick, NJ  
Tompkins County Workers' Center – Ithaca, NY  
Damayan Migrant Workers Center – New York, NY  
Restaurant Opportunity Center (ROC) of New York – New York, NY  
Workers' Center of Central New York – Syracuse, NY  
Western North Carolina Workers' Center – Morganton, NC  
Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Center – Cincinnati, OH  
Workers' Interfaith Network – Memphis, TN  
Workers' Dignity Project – Nashville, TN  
Workers' Defense Project/Proyecto Defensa Laboral – Austin, TX  
Fe Y Justicia (formerly Houston Interfaith Worker Justice Center) – Houston, TX  
Madison Workers' Right Center – Madison, WI  
Voces de la Frontera – Milwaukee, WI