

## Bill Fletcher, Jr., to speak at Progressive Network's annual statewide retreat at Penn Center Oct. 3-4



*Longtime labor and racial justice activist Bill Fletcher, Jr., will join SC progressives Oct. 3.*

When grassroots activists from across the state gather at Penn Center for the Network's 14th annual fall retreat, they will get the chance to hear Bill Fletcher, Jr., one of the nation's leading progressive strategists, speak about the current political climate and what that means for organizers.

"When it comes to both theory and practice, Bill Fletcher is the sharpest knife in the drawer," said Network Director Brett Bursey. "He has the rare gift of cutting through the fog and illuminating the path. He clearly identifies the problems and poses insights, tactics and strategies for solving them."

The weekend gathering is an opportunity for SC activists to map strategy, sharpen organizing skills, reconnect with allies and recharge their batteries.

### REGISTRATION FORM INSIDE!

"We are thrilled to be returning to Penn Center after a few years away," said Network Co-Chair Donna Dewitt, who also serves as president of the SC-

AFL-CIO. "The Network held its founding conference at Penn, and we've had many productive meetings there in the years since. Penn has such great history, and inspires us in ways no other facility does."

Penn Center, one of the country's first schools for freed slaves, was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1974. For more information, see [www.penncenter.com](http://www.penncenter.com).

The weekend retreat offers participants a mix of politics and fellowship in a casual, relaxed setting. This year's retreat will include sessions on how to most effectively organize in these hard economic times. With nonprofit budgets shrinking, there is more work to do with increasingly scarce resources. It is

an opportunity for us to refocus our work, think outside the box, and maximize our collective clout by creating coordinated, strategic campaigns.

"Bill Fletcher has the rare gift of cutting through the fog and illuminating the path. He clearly identifies the problems and poses insights, tactics and strategies for solving them."

The retreat begins on Saturday, Oct. 3, at 10am with a meeting of SCProVote, our political action committee for individual members. Registration begins at 9am.

We will design an endorsement procedure, target races and map timelines. Candidates have been invited to speak.

After lunch, the participants will hear from Bill Fletcher, Jr. After his remarks, participants will be invited to open discussion.

On Saturday afternoon, Rep. Joe Neal, Chair of the Network's Workers' Rights Committee, will offer a State of the State House report. A Q&A will follow.

*See Retreat, Page 3*

### Network to release racial disparities study

The SC Progressive Network produced a study in 2000 that found the arrest rates for black South Carolinians to be among the world's highest. Nearly 10 percent of the entire black population is arrested every year. White arrests in South Carolina are below 4 percent, slightly above the national average. (By contrast, rates in every other civilized country are below 1 percent).

The Network subsequently sponsored legislation designed to identify and inhibit racial profiling by requiring all cops to report all stops. The bill, which required the Dept. of Public Safety to post the information online, passed in 2006, attached to the mandatory seat belt bill.

In April 2009, when DPS regulations to implement the bill went before a Senate committee for approval, we learned that the wording was changed in conference committee. The statute now requires cops to report only "non-custodial" stops, or warning tickets.

*See Study, Page 3*

# Network's push for public Internet service in SC addressed in critical legislative hearing

A three-hour meeting of a legislative subcommittee Aug. 5 gave opponents of privatizing SC ETV's broadband spectrum their first opportunity to challenge the contract that privatizes the system.

The SC Progressive Network presented testimony that the state should retain control of 25 percent of the spectrum for public use. This "mid band" portion of the spectrum would allow robust wireless Internet statewide.

The contract now under consideration could result in the public losing control of the nation's only unified, statewide broadband system.

The subcommittee, comprised of Sen. Glenn McConnell, Sen. Harvey Peeler, Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter and Rep. Dan Cooper, decided that further study of the contract terms were necessary.

The proposed contract leases the statewide educational broadband system to Clearwire and Digital Bridge for 30 years.

Peeler and Cobb-Hunter, who represent rural counties, were concerned that



*SC Progressive Network Director Brett Bursey (left) and Sascha Meinrath, Director of New America Foundation's Open Technology Initiative, speak to the press before the hearing on Aug. 5.*

the contract doesn't require the companies to provide service in rural and underserved areas.

Sascha Meinrath, Director of New America Foundation's Open Technology Initiative, testified and responded to questions regarding the practicality of adopting the system for public access.

Meinrath's participation provided the Network with the necessary technical background and analysis of the issue. Meinrath's comments on the historical under-valuation of public airwaves was of particular interest to the subcommittee.

McConnell, chair of the subcommittee, gave all interested parties an opportunity to submit additional information on the value and benefits of public retention of 25 percent of the spectrum.

Submit comments to the Network <network@scpronet.com>, and we will see that they are included in the legislators'

briefing packet for the subcommittee's Sept. 17 meeting (11am, Rm. 105 in the Gressette Building).

If any of the subcommittee members represent you in the legislature, we encourage you to meet with them. Give the Network a call, or email to schedule a briefing on the issue. ▼

## Go CREDO to support the Network!

To support social change, the Network has taken action with a company called CREDO Mobile. CREDO is a mobile phone company just like AT&T or Verizon — except that, unlike those companies, CREDO agitates for progressive change.

CREDO, part of Working Assets, gives 1 percent of its revenues away to nonprofits like Doctors Without Borders, and they've given away over \$60 million over the last 20 years.

CREDO has offered us a deal. Here's how it works: If you sign up to be a CREDO customer, they'll cover the cancellation fee (up to \$200) on your existing mobile contract and give you a free phone, plus they'll give the Network \$100 for referring you.

Most of you have cell phones with companies that don't have social justice as part of their mission.

"We switched to CREDO for our mobile service," said Network Director Brett Bursey, "and the service is better and cheaper than what we had, the customer support is amazing, and we use CREDO Action to send messages to the White House and Congress."

To sign up, just do the following:

- Call 1-877-76CREDO.
- Give them this offer code: 800222
- Finally, give them the Network's personalized coupon code MVMXD. ▼

## Nominations open for Executive Committee

Elections for open seats on the SC Progressive Network's Education Fund's Executive Committee will be held at the Network's fall retreat on Oct. 3-4. To nominate a Network member to serve, use the form included in this newsletter by Sept. 22.

The EC is elected by the Network's Board, which is comprised of a representative from each member organization, with officers serving two-year terms. The "at large" member is elected by individual Network members; organizational representatives vote on the other seats.

The EC meets every other month in person or by conference call. For details, call 803-808-3384. ▼

# Thunder & Lightning fundraiser Oct. 17 to honor SC activists



**M**ake reservations today for the Network's Thunder & Lightning Awards, a celebration that recognizes courageous community activism in South Carolina.

The event will be held on Oct. 17 at 7pm at The Big Apple, corner of Park and Hampton in Columbia.

The award is named for Frederick Douglass, who said, *"Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are people who want crops without plowing the ground...rain without thunder and lightning. Power concedes nothing without demand and struggle. It never has and it never will."*

The theme for the evening is "An Argentine Affair" with Argentine food, drink, music and dance. Tickets are \$25 single/\$40 couple. Call 803-808-3384 for reservations. ▼

## Meet Bill Fletcher, Jr.

**B**ill Fletcher, Jr., is Executive Editor of *The Black Commentator* and founder of the Center for Labor Renewal. A longtime labor, racial justice and international activist, he is past president of TransAfrica Forum, a national nonprofit organization organizing, educating and advocating for policies in favor of the peoples of Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America. He is a founder of the Black Radical Congress and is a Senior Scholar for the Institute for Policy Studies.

Fletcher got his start in the labor movement as a member of the Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of America. Combining labor and community work, he was also involved in ongoing efforts to desegregate the Boston building trades. He later served in leadership and staff positions with the United Auto Workers, National Postal Mail Handlers Union and Service Employees International Union (SEIU). He is currently the AFGE Director of Field Services & Education Department.

Fletcher is co-author of *Solidarity Divided, The Crisis in Organized Labor* and *A New Path Toward Social Justice*. He is a graduate of Harvard University, has authored numerous articles and speaks widely on domestic and international topics, racial justice and labor issues. ▼

### From Retreat, Page 1

Participants will spend the rest of the afternoon in breakout groups to work on existing Network initiatives. Those include: Racial Profiling, GLBTQ Rights, Missing Voter Project, Workers Rights, Abolishing the Death Penalty, and Waging Peace.

If you want to help facilitate a session, call us ASAP at 803-808-3384.

There will also be time for caucuses for other issues and organizations to meet.

A fish fry for dinner will be followed by social time. Sunday morning we will hear reports from the breakout groups and caucuses, and elect Network officers. (Nomination form included.)

After lunch, there will be time for further project meetings or caucuses before we adjourn.



**Rep. Joe Neal will lead a discussion at the retreat on the state of the State House. This photo was taken during a July Network meeting on a workers rights campaign, which Neal chairs.**

The entire retreat package is \$100, which includes all meals and overnight accommodations. Registration options are on the enclosed registration form.

A full agenda is listed at [scpronet.com](http://scpronet.com). You do not need to be a member of the Network to attend. ▼

### From Study, Page 1

"Requiring only warning tickets to be recorded guts the intent of this legislation," said bill sponsor Rep. Joe Neal. "Police should be willing to divulge the race of the more than 2 million drivers who get tickets every year."

The Network, with the assistance of an intern from the USC Women and Gender Studies Department, has reviewed the most recent arrest rates and DPS' implementation of the system to track warning tickets.

"Arrest rates for black South Carolinians since 2000 are still double what they are for whites," said Network intern Kathryn Witzke. "We found that the system to track racial

disparities in warning tickets is ineffective at best and violates the statute at worst."

Of the 295 police agencies in SC that are supposed to be filing monthly reports on the race and gender of non-custodial stops, only 71 are in full compliance, and 80 have never filed since the system became mandatory in July 2008.

The Network will publish the results of the new study this fall. "We will insure that citizens and local officials in the jurisdictions of the 224 police agencies who are breaking the law get a copy of the report," Neal said.

When completed, we will post the report on the Network's web site at [www.scpronet.com](http://www.scpronet.com). ▼

# JOIN the SC Progressive Network

Individual members agree to support the Network's mission and pay annual dues of at least \$25; \$10 for seniors and students. (Dues are not tax-deductible.)

**Mission:** The purpose of the SC Progressive Network is to promote — through education and action — human, civil, workers' and reproductive rights, environmental protection and government reform.

I \_\_\_\_\_, agree to the terms above, and submit this application to join.

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

- Add me to the Network's email list to receive weekly updates about Network events.
- Individual dues (pay to SCPN)
- Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation, above dues, payable to the SCPN Education Fund:



Call 803-808-3384 or email [network@scpronet.com](mailto:network@scpronet.com) for your FREE Network bumper sticker!



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