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[Home](#) > Occupied Wall Street Journal - from the front lines

[Occupied Wall Street Journal - from the front lines](#) [1]

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#occupied

by **Jennifer Sacks**

(01-23-12) Washington DC

This week in Occupy, demonstrators swarmed on Washington D.C. to mark three milestones: the 83rd birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., the return of Congress following the holiday break and the second

anniversary of the *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision.

#On January 16, in observance of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, the [Occupy The Dream](#) [3] action [drew hundreds of demonstrators](#) [4] to Washington D.C. to protest the Federal Reserve Bank's monetary policy and [growing income inequality](#) [5].

#On January 17, [occupiers entered the Rayburn House Office Building](#) [6], the home of Congress, where they dropped a banner from the front of the structure and roamed the hallways in search of representatives to talk policy with as part of the **Occupy Congress** action. Demonstrators outside were serenaded by Madison Rising, a self-described "pro-American" conservative band, who performed an impromptu five-song set. Lead singer [Dave Bray said](#) [7] that, to his shock, "we were met with a warm welcome."



#Elsewhere on January 17, occupiers [demonstrated outside the Apollo Theater in Harlem](#) [8], where President Obama was holding a \$36,000-per-ticket fundraiser. (The average median income in Harlem is [\\$27,515](#) [9].)

#On January 20, the second anniversary of the Supreme Court's [Citizens United decision](#) [10] which granted corporations the same rights as people when it comes to political spending, prompting the rise of wallet-busting SuperPACs, demonstrators occupied 75 federal courthouses across the country, including the Supreme Court, and staged [Occupy the Courts](#) [11] to promote [a 28th constitutional amendment](#) [12] declaring that corporations are not people and that campaign contributions are not a form of speech. Once the peaceful demonstration reached the steps of the Supreme Court, [police swooped in](#) [13], arresting 11. Activists in more than [one hundred cities](#) [14] participated, including Boston, Minneapolis, Cleveland and London.

#Also on the 2nd anniversary of *Citizens United*, the [recently-evicted](#) [15] **Occupy Syracuse** [launched a petition drive](#) [16] to get the Syracuse Common Council to support a constitutional amendment declaring that corporations are not people. The encampment joins the New York City Council, which earlier this month [passed a resolution](#)

[17] asking Congress to pass an amendment overturning the decision. In December, the [Los Angeles](#) [18] City Council and the [Duluth, Minnesota](#) [19], city council passed similar resolutions; in November, it was [Missoula, Montana](#) [20] and [Boulder, Colorado](#) [21]. [Vermont](#) [22], [Orlando](#) [23] and [Portland, Maine](#) [24] are poised to join them. [Here is a complete list](#) [25] of federal, state and local proposals to overturn the disastrous decision, which [has become](#) [26] a rallying point for the movement.



#The **Occupy Milwaukee** encampment known as [Occupy Riverwest](#) [27], on the east side of Milwaukee, celebrated its 99th consecutive, uninterrupted day of occupying. Recently they've been dropping banners from abandoned and foreclosed properties and holding bus chats, where they engage commuting Wisconsinites in political discourse.

#In Portland, Oregon, Cameron Whitten, 20, of **Occupy Portland**, [entered the race for mayor](#) [28]. Whitten gathered the papers to register on November 14th, the day after he was arrested during the Occupy Portland eviction. ?Portland has a history of economic and racial oppression which is still apparent in its highly segregated neighborhoods,? [he said in a press release.](#) [29] ?Although the city flaunts its liberal, progressive politics, it is lagging behind in employment and education in comparison to the rest of the country.?

#Some creative direct action tied to the Republican presidential race has grabbed headlines. In South Carolina, where a primary was held on January 21, activists reportedly from **Occupy Charleston** [glitter-bombed](#) [30] former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum, who is a frequent target because of his antiquated and bigoted [views on homosexuality](#) [31]. Elsewhere during the primary, occupiers passed out surveys at polling stations and engaged voters in an attempt to combat voter apathy. ?We talk about the 99%; we need to sometimes talk about the 40% of people who don't come out and vote,? Dave Crossley from Occupy Charleston [told the local ABC affiliate](#) [32].

#On January 9, timed to the New Hampshire Republican primary, **Occupy Worcester** [staged a die-in](#) [33] outside President Obama's local re-election headquarters to protest his signing of the [National Defense Authorization Act](#) [34] into law.



#Occupy demonstrators also made their mark at [the Iowa caucuses](#) ^[35], where they stormed the Democrats' war room and asked to speak with Democratic National Committee chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz. "The Democratic party has held the White House since 2008 and had a Democratic majority in Congress for two years," they wrote in a letter they hand-delivered to Democratic staffers. "During that time, President Obama and the Democratic party put the agenda of Wall Street and the corporate 1% first over the needs of 99% of the country. Your leadership failed us. You must do better in 2012." Occupiers operating under the [Occupy the Caucus](#) ^[36] banner [also staged a die-in](#) ^[37] to protest the signing of the NDAA.

#The Florida primary on January 31 will no doubt set the stage for Occupy marches and demonstrations, as Florida counts 19 occupations within its borders. On January 10, [Occupy West Palm Beach](#) ^[38] joined the state's 18 other encampments in hosting the ["Awake the State" rally](#) ^[39] to protest Governor Rick Scott and his Republican-controlled statehouse. Self-described "Raging Grannies," activists and labor leaders turned out on the first day of the legislative session because "we know we're not safe," Tony Fransetta, the president of the Florida Alliance for Retired Americans, told the Palm Beach Post. "We know they're going to do things that aren't going to be progressive. We know they're going to attack the middle class."

#**Occupy Chicago** has [secured headquarters](#) ^[40] for the winter, when the average temperature hovers around 25°F. The convergence of the [G8 and NATO summits](#) ^[41] on the city in May will likely be the locus of massive demonstrations.



#On January 3, New York's Grand Central Station was occupied and [a massive mic-check](#) ^[42] conducted during rush hour to protest the signing of the NDAA, which could one day be used to arrest citizens on American soil for any number of offenses, including protesting.

#**Occupy London** has staged the first of its [citizen tribunals](#) ^[43] at a former magistrates court in the London borough of Hackney. On Thursday, a four-man panel [presented evidence](#) for the former British government under Tony Blair to be prosecuted for war crimes, and on Friday they examined the government's plans to criminalize squatting. Both feeds will be edited together and presented to the police.

#**Occupy Madison** [held its final outdoor rally](#) ^[44] of the winter on January 8, drawing about 30 men, women and children holding signs demanding economic justice.

#The effort to recall Wisconsin governor Scott Walker ? who ended collective bargaining rights for public



employees, kicking off [a new wave of American activism](#) ^[45] last winter ? has garnered [more than a million signatures](#) ^[44]. To spark a recall election, only 540,208 were needed.

#Despite pressure from Congress and the mayor, [Occupy D.C. is holding firm](#) ^[46] at their encampment site at McPherson Square. Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA), chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, [will hold a hearing](#) ^[47] on January 24 entitled, ?McPherson Square: Who Made the Decision to Allow Indefinite Camping in the Park??

#Occupy Gainesville is hosting the first [Southeast Regional Conference of Occupations](#) ^[48] in the lush cypress groves of North Florida on March 23-25, 2012.

#Occupy Davos ^[49] has begun in earnest as protesters have started constructing igloos in the Swiss snow to form the basis of their occupation ahead of the January 25 World Economic Forum.

#A Reuters/Ipsos poll ^[50] found that 33% of the global citizens who are familiar with the Occupy movement feel favorably toward it.

Want to report news about your occupation or meetup? Email us at atoccupymedia@gmail.com ^[51]

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- [1] <http://indyradio.nu/content/occupied-wall-street-journal-front-lines>
- [2] <http://indyradio.nu/user/1>
- [3] <http://www.occupythedream.org/>
- [4] <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/usa/Occupy-The-Dream-Holds-First-National-Day-of-Action-137454948.html>
- [5] <http://www.propublica.org/article/the-u.s.s-growing-income-gap-by-the-numbers/single>
- [6] <http://www.theatlanticwire.com/national/2012/01/arrests-and-standoff-occupy-congress-turn-tense/47511/>
- [7] <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0112/71661.html>
- [8] http://inthesetimes.com/uprising/entry/12594/harlem_gives_occupy_tense_reception#.TxmThEr-ZuY.facebook
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- [10] http://www.salon.com/2012/01/21/the_hard_truth_of_citizens_united/
- [11] <http://movetoamend.org/occupythecourts>
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