



Activists Visit Geithner's Home to Ask "Which Side Are You On?"

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Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner is known as a workaholic, given to exhausting 70-plus hour work weeks. But he was at home late Sunday afternoon -- perhaps planning on watching baseball or basketball, catching up on his reading, or just chilling with family or friends -- when about a thousand uninvited guests [interrupted his rest and relaxation](#).

The protesters were activists from National People's Action (NPA) and the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA). NPA, a community organizing group with 26 affiliates in 14 states, has been on the front lines of the grassroots movement to tame Wall Street's corporate excesses, pressure banks to stop the epidemic of foreclosures, and push Congress to enact tougher bank regulations to avoid another catastrophic meltdown. NDWA -- which organizes housekeepers, nannies, and caregivers to demand rights and respect through its 35 local affiliates in 11 states -- successfully pushed to enact a "domestic workers bill of rights" in New York State in 2010 and is now working to replicate that victory in California and other states.

Busloads of NPA and NDWA members visited Geithner's brick split-level home in suburban Bethesda, Md, at twilight. Geithner, a former chair of the New York Federal Reserve, is the top former Wall Street insider in President Barack Obama's inner circle. The protesters consider Geithner the key architect of Obama's economic recovery plan and the loudest voice within the president's inner circle for taking a "hands off" approach to tougher government rules to tame Wall Street's risky practices.

The activists held signs that said: "Wall Street: Pay Your Fair Share," "Put People First," and "Geithner: Which Side Are You On?" A few dozen of the protesters wore Robin Hood outfits. The protest is part of an escalating protest movement, Occupy-style, that progressive groups hope will shake up this election season.

Bobby Tolbert, a 59-year old former aerospace factory worker from New York City who is active with VOCAL (an NPA affiliate), rang the doorbell and knocked three times on the front door at the Treasury Secretary's modest home. He claimed that Geithner looked through the peephole, but didn't open the door. Had Geithner done so, Tolbert would have given him a letter outlining the activists' demands.

The two groups want Geithner to stand with America and not Wall Street by supporting a financial speculation tax and stop undermining the investigations of bankers. The so-called "Robin Hood" tax is less than half of one percent, on stock, derivatives and other trades that would generate billions to invest in infrastructure, jobs, housing, education and health care. It would also, the protestors said, curb the type of speculation that caused the economic meltdown and led to JPMorgan Chase's recent \$3 billion loss. Geithner has repeatedly sided with bankers against the Robin Hood tax.

Several members of Congress, including Rep. Pete Stark (D-CA), Rep. Peter Defazio (D-OR), and Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), have sponsored different versions of the financial speculation tax.

"The Wall Street banks crashed the economy," Tolbert said. "So the financial speculation tax on big banks is one way we can recover that stolen revenue and help pay for the vital services that are being cut by local and state governments, like schools and health care."

"We went to Mr. Geithner's house to demand that he stand with the 99% against those who have stolen our dreams," Maria Reyes, a 65-year-old former elder care worker from Hayward, Calif., who lost her home when the Bank of America evicted her family after her husband and son lost their jobs as construction workers. "In these times when banks balance their debts on our backs, we need the government to stand with us. I have dreams for my family as do all domestic workers, and we refuse to give them up."

In their letter, the protestors also asked Geithner to stop undermining the mortgage fraud investigation on big banks that Obama announced in his State of the Union Address in January, and that he start taking bold action to keep people in their homes, including requiring banks to reduce the principal on "underwater" mortgages that are worth less than the value of the homes. Four million Americans [have already lost their homes](#) to foreclosure and another 1.6 million are on the brink of foreclosure.

"I thought it was pretty amazing -- common people from across the nation. There we stood in front of Geithner's house,"

explained Barbara Kalbach, 61, a fourth-generation family farmer and registered nurse from Dexter, Iowa. "I hope that he heard our message."

After spending 40 minutes of prayers, songs, and speeches in front of Geithner's home, the protesters -- mostly low-wage workers from more than 25 states -- re-boarded the buses and headed to nearby Chevy Chase, where they visited the home of Peter Scher, JPMorgan Chase's chief lobbyist, to demand that Jamie Dimon, the bank's CEO, step down from the New York Fed and that the bank offer principal reduction for underwater homeowners to keep them in their homes.

"Wall Street has recovered well," said Kalbach, who grows corns and soybeans and is active with NPA affiliate Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, "but the rest of America has not."

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