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This Past Week's Progressive Scorecard

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It is always good to remind ourselves that progressive change doesn't happen overnight, that most progress comes as steppingstone victories, and that setbacks are a normal part of the struggle for social justice. As Michael Harrington reminded us, social justice activists have to be marathon runners, not sprinters.

That said, some weeks are more momentous than others -- both good and bad, big and little. This past week was particularly eventful. The lives of our children and grandchildren will be significantly affected by things that happened in the last seven days.

- The U.S. Senate passed S.744, the historic bipartisan immigration reform bill.
- The U.S. Supreme Court invalidated a key part of the landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965.
- The same U.S. Supreme Court struck down the Defense of Marriage Act and California's Proposition 8 ban on same-sex marriage.
- The Republican-controlled Texas legislature enacted severe limitations on women's right to abortion, but not before state Sen. Wendy Davis bravely stood on the floor of the Statehouse for 11 hours -- without food or water -- filibustering the bill, galvanizing activists who packed the balcony, and creating a new progressive heroine.
- Cong. Ed Markey, a progressive Democrat, handily defeated his Republican opponent to fill the U.S. Senate seat from Massachusetts vacated by John Kerry when he became Secretary of State. Markey joins fellow Massachusetts progressive Elizabeth Warren in the Senate.
- Twenty-two people -- many of whom are former Obama campaign staffers and donors -- were arrested at the State Department's downtown Chicago office while peacefully protesting the controversial Keystone XL (KXL) tar sands pipeline. The NoKXL campaign, backed by CREDO Action, Rainforest Action Network, and The Other 98%, organized the demonstration.
- In his speech on climate change at Georgetown University on Tuesday, President Obama signaled that he'd approve the project only if it does not substantially increase greenhouse gas emissions. "The president is saying what the science has always demanded," Bill McKibben said. "It's encouraging news for certain."
- Obama's speech echoed much of what environmental activists have been advocating. He endorsed the idea of "divestment" from companies that promote fossil fuels. He noted that big corporations will complain that climate change regulations will hurt they economy but said that they are crying wolf (ie lying) when they do.

- The Washington, D.C. City Council on Wednesday gave its initial approval to a bill that would raise the minimum wage of workers at large retail stores from the ordinary District minimum of \$8.25 an hour to \$12.50.
- The New York City Council overrode a veto by Mayor Michael Bloomberg to pass a law that would require businesses to offer paid sick leave for their workers. The benefit will go into effect in 2014 for employees of businesses with 20 or more workers and at a later date for smaller employers.
- Activists in North Carolina continued their weekly "Moral Monday" demonstrations outside the state capitol, protesting the Republicans agenda. This week, thousands of people rallied and 120 activists engaged to civil disobedience. Over 600 have been arrested over the course of 8 "Moral Monday" demonstrations, led by the NAACP.
- Local city governments in Richmond, CA and North Las Vegas, Nevada took the first steps to help homeowners trapped in "underwater" mortgages. These cities are planning to take the mortgages by eminent domain, reduce them to their current market values, and resell them, saving homeowners thousands of dollars a year and restoring the city's property tax revenues and public services. Wall Street is not happy.
- Edward Snowden, on the run, left Hong Kong for Moscow, but still hasn't found a country that won't extradite him to the U.S. for leaking the NSA information about government surveillance. His actions triggered a global debate over government surveillance and the balance between civil liberties and public safety.
- President Barack Obama announced Thursday that the U.S. will end trade privileges with Bangladesh over concerns for safety and working conditions in factories. The decision in response to growing public outrage in the US and around the world about recent garment factory disasters, including the collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory outside Dhaka on April 24 that killed 1,100 people.
- And let's not forget the growing pro-democracy protest movements in Brazil and Turkey.

The list could be much longer -- good and bad. This is just meant to remind us that the struggle for justice continues, day by day, week by week, year by year.

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