



NORTHWEST

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## The Bus Driver

*TriMet retiree Ben Fain gets behind the wheel again for the cause*

By DON McINTOSH  
Associate Editor

In 26 years driving buses at TriMet, Ben Fain was a loyal if not particularly active member of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Division 757.

Since his 2002 retirement, however, he's become a bus-borne activist — chauffeuring the mostly young progressives of the Bus Project to political happenings and door-to-door canvasses.

The Bus Project is best-known for mobilizing busloads of volunteers to do a day's work for progressive candidates in close electoral races. Since 2002, the group's volunteers have knocked on 200,000 doors and contributed to the election of over a dozen state legislators, said Bus Project managing director Garrett Downen. And the group has close ties to several politically-active unions. The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, the American Federation of Teach-

ers-Oregon, and the Carpenters Union have sponsored bus trips; other unions have made donations. Bus Project co-founder Joe Baessler became Oregon AFSCME's political coordinator.

Fain climbed aboard the Bus Project when it was still an idea. At a Christmas holiday family reunion in 2001, his sister's grandson, Aaron Imlah, asked him if he would drive a bus for a group he was helping form.

"They had a bus without a driver, and I was a driver without a bus," Fain recalls.

Fain, 67, said he had always voted for progressive politicians and issues, but retirement would open up much more time to get involved.

He decided to keep his commercial driver's license active and drive the bus, a 1978 MCI Crusader converted to biodiesel.

Fain thinks he's done probably 95 percent of the driving since the project began. Volunteering sparked a political awakening for him. It strengthened his belief in the importance of unions and the power of individuals to make change by coming together.

Fain, the son of a bricklayer, worked in union jobs all his life, starting in the early 1950s with the Bricklayers Union, continuing as a Boeing

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### In Oregon

## New Yorker pours \$2.8 million into ballot measures

Out-of-state money has made itself felt in Oregon politics before, but a pair of ballot measures up for a vote this November has Oregonians wondering about how thoroughly their citizen initiative process can be hijacked to serve a private agenda.

As detailed in three sets of mandatory campaign finance disclosures, every phase of Ballot measures 45 and 48 has been almost entirely financed by one individual — conservative New York real estate millionaire Howard Rich. Measure 45 would set term limits for state elected officials, and Measure 48 would set an inflexible limit on state spending; both are opposed by the Oregon AFL-CIO and other labor organizations.

Rich is founder and financier of the group Americans For Limited Government, which contends that government is doing too much, and is charging excessive taxes. But rather than focus on the federal government, which has been spending more than

it takes in since President Clinton left office, Rich's group is targeting state governments, which by law must live within their means.

Oregon is one of a number of states where Rich's millions have financed paid petitioners and political consultants to put identical questions before voters.

Such a top-down campaign is a far cry from the citizen uprisings Oregonians imagined when they set up the initiative system. It was supposed to be a way to get around the Oregon Legislature in cases where legislators were truly unresponsive to the popular will: If citizens gather signatures from enough fellow citizens, statutes and constitutional amendments go directly to the electorate for approval or rejection.

But the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1988 that states couldn't ban the use of paid petitioners, and that opened up the initiative

process for political experiments by deep-pocket ideologues and special favors for moneyed interests. Some initiatives still come about with grassroots citizen support, but almost every election also has measures that were bought and paid for by big money.

That's why New Yorker Howard Rich may be the most important man in Oregon this year. His proposals — Measures 45 and 48 — don't carry his name on them, but they come with his money.

Entities controlled by Rich have given \$2 million to a Missouri group pushing a spending cap, \$1 million to an Arizona group pushing a spending cap, and \$100,000 to an Oklahoma group.

Rich's contributions to Oregon ballot measure campaigns totalled \$2.8 million, the Oregonian reported Sept. 12. The most

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Let me say this about that

—By Gene Klare

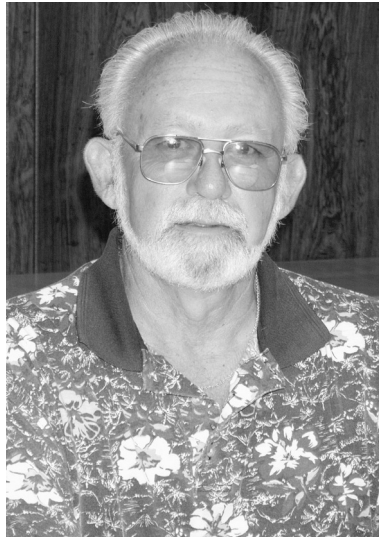


## Wilkerson welcomed

**THE LABOR HALL OF FAME** has welcomed Bill Wilkerson, retired business manager of Linoleum and Carpet Layers Local 1236. He was selected for the honor by the sponsoring Northwest Oregon Labor Retirees Council, an affiliate of the Portland-based NW Oregon Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

The Labor Retirees Council started the Labor Hall of Fame in 1997 to provide recognition to retired unionists for their contributions to the labor movement.

**BILL WILKERSON**, 65, retired on June 31, 2000, as financial secretary and business manager of Linoleum, Carpet and Soft Tile Applicators Local 1236 after holding the post for 14 years. Local 1236 is an affiliate of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades and operates out of a union office building at 11105 NE Sandy Boulevard in Portland, which houses other Painters-affiliated locals and Painters District Council 5.



**BILL WILKERSON**

Wilkerson and his wife, Karel, are residents of Vancouver, Washington, where they've lived most of their lives. He was born as William S. Wilkerson on June 24, 1941 in the Eastern Washington city of Pasco. While growing up, he lived there, and in Wishram, Wash., across the Columbia River from The Dalles, and in Vancouver. His father's job caused their moves. John Wilkerson worked for the Spokane, Portland and Seattle Railroad as a brakeman on freight trains and as a conductor on passenger trains. He was a union man — a member of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen.

**IN HIGH SCHOOL** at Fort Vancouver High and later for two years at nearby Clark College, Bill Wilkerson competed in the sports of wrestling and weightlifting. Bill and Karel Wirth met while in high school and were married on April 7, 1962, a short time after he finished his three-year apprenticeship in the floor-covering trade, which he had started while still attending college. He received his apprenticeship classroom instruction at Beach School in Northeast Portland.

Wilkerson worked at Burgess Floor Covering in Vancouver for six years until it went out of business. His next employer was Studer Floor Covering in Vancouver, where he worked for 21 years. Bill's career at Studer's took him to many states where his crew handled floor-covering projects at Albertsons and Safeway supermarkets and at motels and condominiums. He left Studer's to become the leader of Local 1236.

**IN HIS YEARS** as financial secretary and business manager of Local 1236, Wilkerson negotiated collective bargaining contracts with employers in Oregon and Washington and performed all the other duties involved in running a local union. He chaired the Western States Floor Covering Pension and Health and Welfare Trust Funds. He served as vice president of the Columbia-Pacific Building and Construction Trades Council and was a delegate to conventions of the Oregon and Washington State Building and Construction Trades Councils, the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, the Oregon AFL-CIO and meetings of various central labor councils. He also attended legislative conferences in Washington, D.C., conducted by the national AFL-CIO Building Trades Department.

Within the Painters and Allied Trades International Union, Wilkerson was a delegate to its conventions and played a principal role in rewriting apprenticeship

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# NLRB ruling changes definition of supervisor, unions will be hit hard

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Republican-dominated National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) voted 3-2 along party lines to slash long-time federal labor laws protecting workers' freedom to form unions, and opened the door for employers to classify millions of workers as supervisors. Under federal labor law, supervisors are prohibited from forming unions.

The decision was voted on Sept. 29 but not released publicly until Oct. 3 (as this issue of the NW Labor Press was going to press).

The NLRB ruled on three cases, collectively known as "Kentucky River," but it's the lead case, Oakwood Healthcare Inc. that creates a new definition of supervisor. The Board ruled 3-2 to exclude "charge nurses" who perform clinical assignment from union rights.

In the other two cases being considered — Golden Crest and Croft Metals — the Board ruled against redefining workers as supervisors.

"But that reflects management not crafting the facts in the case to the Board's satisfaction," said Paul Bigman, Western Region field organizer for Jobs

with Justice. "It is clear that, in the future, management will sculpt 'supervisory' responsibilities to meet the Oakwood standard; and it is equally clear that the anti-worker Board majority will look to apply that standard in other industries, as well."

In Oakwood, the Board agreed with the employer that charge nurses are supervisors. But the ruling also sets broad definitions for determining who is a supervisor that invites employers to classify nurses and many low-level employees with minor authority as supervisors, the national AFL-CIO warned.

According to the labor federation, the Board's new definition essentially enables employers to make a supervisor out of any worker who has the authority to assign or direct another, and uses independent judgment.

"Amazingly, the Board also ruled that a worker can be classified as a supervisor if he or she spends as little as 10 percent to 15 percent of his or her time overseeing the work of others," the AFL-CIO said.

In their dissent, NLRB members

Wilma Liebman and Dennis Walsh, both Democrats, say the decision "threatens to create a new class of workers under federal labor law — workers who have neither the genuine prerogatives of management, nor the statutory rights of ordinary employees."

Liebman and Walsh wrote that most professionals and other workers could fall under the new definition of supervisor, "who by 2012 could number almost 34 million, accounting for 23.3 percent of the workforce." They go on to say that the Republican majority did not follow what Congress intended in applying the National Labor Relations Act:

"Congress cared about the precise scope of the Act's definition of 'supervisor,' and so should the Board. Instead, the majority's decision reflects an unfortunate failure to engage in the sort of reasoned decision-making that Congress expected from the Board, which has the primary responsibility for developing and applying national labor policy."

Currently, the NLRB is holding up dozens of cases that address the definition of supervisor, and 60 of those are union election cases. These cases have been sent back to the various regional boards. In some of these cases, workers who voted several years ago to form a union still are waiting for their ballots to be counted.

"The ramifications of this case are extremely serious; the decision could have a significant impact on the quality of patient care and workers' rights," the American Federation of Teachers Healthcare said in a press release.

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney called the decisions "outrageous and unjustified. The NLRB should protect workers' rights, not eliminate them," he said. "If the Administration expects us to take this quietly, they're mistaken."

Over the past five years, three of President Bush's appointees to the five-person NLRB have been recess appointments that did not require Senate confirmation.



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# Richmond Baking workers okay first Local 114 contract

McMINNVILLE, Ore. — Workers at a small industrial bakery here approved their first-ever union contract Sept. 26 — nine months after they voted to join Local 114 of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM).

The bakery, one of three owned by Richmond Baking, produces organic cookies and crackers, cracker meal, and batter mixes for the wholesale market.

Unionizing meant dignity, improved safety and a pay raise for the 11 employees. It also takes pressure off union workers at a larger facility in Indiana.

Terry Lansing, secretary-treasurer of Local 114, said BCTGM represents over 100 workers at a Richmond Baking facility in Richmond, Indiana. The company has been family-owned since 1902, and the Indiana plant has been union for generations. But the latest generation of company owners decided to try to “whipsaw” the union in contract negotiations last year, suggesting production would be shifted to nonunion bakeries in McMinnville and Alma, Georgia, if the union didn’t make concessions.

It turned out that the McMinnville workers were eager to organize, thanks in part to a history of verbal abuse from the local manager.

Richmond quality control worker Dena Ochoa was engaged to marry co-worker Darren Thomas, who had been a Bakery Union member earlier. They decided to give the union a call, and met with Lansing and other staff to plan a campaign.

While low wages, safety concerns and job security were concerns, Lansing said the biggest issue was how they were treated by the plant manager — always feeling their jobs were in jeopardy, and having to listen to how the manager talked to them and other workers.

On Dec. 27, 2005, Richmond workers filed a petition with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) requesting a union election. Later that day, after the NLRB notified the company by FAX, the Richmond manager called Ochoa at home and fired her over the phone. Ochoa was hosting a union meeting when she took the manager’s call, and she put the call on speaker phone so she’d have witnesses.

Local 114 immediately mounted a legal defense, filing a charge



**The Sept. 26 contract ratification meeting. Left to right: Business Manager Terry Lansing, Josh Rinne, Dexter Salisbury, Jeremy Brown (negotiating team member), Trinidad Quintero (kneeling in front of Jeremy), Mario Aldaco (negotiating team member), Lacey Kreiger, Business Representative Gene Beaudoin (kneeling, BCTGM 114), Cory Kovalski (standing behind Lacey), Angelina Garcia, TR Arriola, Rodolfo Cortez and Kyle Headings (sitting).**

the next day with the NLRB, the federal agency supposed to guard workers’ right to unionize if they choose to do so. The charge said Ochoa was fired because of her legally-protected union activity. Local 114 also got her a job at another union bakery — Orowheat.

The NLRB set a March 1 date for a union election, and the campaign heated up. The day before the election, Local 114 filed another charge with the NLRB, saying management was continuing to break the law in its anti-union campaign. According to the

union, Richmond interrogated employees about the union campaign and threatened the loss of raises.

Workers went ahead with their election, voting 6-2 to unionize March 1, 2006. A day later, the company told workers they weren’t allowed to leave their work areas anymore because they’d voted in a union, and went back on a promise to promote an employee who was believed to have supported the union.

BCTGM representative Eric Anderson led a full-day steward training for all the workers. They needed to know their rights.

The election result, however, meant the company was legally obligated to recognize the union and to bargain a contract.

Workers filed a detailed safety grievance with the company, ranging from railings on the catwalks to guardrails on platforms on top of silos where workers changed filter screens. Richmond responded, and fixed numerous problems, Lansing said.

After five months, Richmond Baking settled the NLRB charges. While not admitting guilt, the company agreed Aug. 29 to post a notice promising not to do what it had been accused of, and to award Dena Ochoa (now Dena Thomas) \$6,000 in back pay. She waived her right to reinstatement.

After 11 bargaining sessions and the assistance of a federal mediator, the two sides reached agreement Sept. 23 on a first union contract. The pact contains immediate hourly raises of between 50 cents and \$1.75, and 25 cent annual raises thereafter; workers make \$9 to \$10 an hour. It also includes a grievance procedure, overtime pay after 10 straight hours, safety protections, holiday, vacation and bereavement leave, seniority rights for layoff and recall, job bidding, vacation selection procedures, pension provisions, continuation of medical coverage while on medical leave, and limits on the use of temporary employees — temps become permanent if they work 60 days in four months. And it has “just cause” protection — meaning employees can’t be disciplined arbitrarily — management has to document violations of specific rules, and has to follow reasonable rules before issuing discipline.

“It’s better — working with a union,” said Mario Aldaco, lead sanitation worker on swing shift. “You feel protected.”

Thomas left Orowheat for personal medical reasons, but hopes to return. She credits the union for the defense, and for the feeling of empowerment co-workers felt.

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# WHAT'S HAPPENING

## UA Local 290 to offer members free hepatitis testing

Plumbers and Fitters Local 290 will offer free hepatitis testing for all of its members Monday, Oct. 16, starting at 6 p.m.

Additionally, training for blood-borne pathogens and infectious disease will be offered to all of the union's apprentices, and to any journey-level craftsman who wants it.

Local 290 also offers a four-hour pathogens class for its members.

Eugene/Springfield will also host an event, and all apprentices and journeymen and women throughout Local 290's jurisdiction will have the testing made available locally, said John Endicott, business manager and financial secretary-treasurer of the union.

Plumbers and pipefitters are particularly susceptible on the job to hepatitis C, a potentially fatal disease of the liver. The hep C virus (HCV) is spread by blood to blood contact, and can be acquired through broken skin, the mucous membranes, or the eyes.

The free hepatitis testing is funded through a partnership with Roche Pharmaceuticals.

## PDC sessions explore prevailing work wage issues

The Portland Development Commission held the first of three work sessions it has scheduled to discuss construction wages on projects that it helps finance.

The first work session held Sept. 20 attracted about 45 people and featured little discussion, but lots of history on how state prevailing wage laws work. Oregon Labor Commissioner Dan Gardner and his staff gave a 90-minute presentation on wage laws, how surveys are conducted, the importance of apprenticeship training and more.

The format for the next work session on Wednesday, Oct. 18, will include two panels, one with invited union officials, and another panel with invited representatives of nonunion construction contractors. One to two hours will be open to public testimony.

The work session will be held from 4 to 9 p.m. in the PDC conference room at 222 NW Fifth Ave., Portland.

A third work session originally scheduled for Nov. 7 has been rescheduled for Thursday, Nov. 9. It also will run from 4 to 9 p.m.

Following the work sessions, the PDC board will consider whether or not it should set wage and benefit requirements on projects that aren't

clearly subject to prevailing wage laws.

The quasi-independent development arm of the Portland City Council has been under fire from city commissioners, the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries and building trades unions for allegedly circumventing state prevailing wage laws on some of its public-private development projects.

## Carpenters start fund for organizer held by Immigration

The Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters has opened a "Luis Mendoza Solidarity Fund" following the union organizer's arrest last month by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers.

A representative of Interior/Exterior Specialists Local 2154 of Portland, Mendoza has worked for the past six years as an organizer for the union.

According to Pete Savage, regional manager of the Carpenters Council, Mendoza, 37, will be charged with forgery of a federal document. He has a court date set for December.

Officers from ICE, the FBI and U.S. Marshals arrested Mendoza at his Molalla home on Sept. 7. The family posted \$5,000 bond Sept. 29, but their future is uncertain.

"He has a wife and two kids, and now he's not allowed to work," Savage said.

To help, the union has set up a Soli-

arity Fund for the family, last weekend a dozen union members went to Mendoza's home to paint it and prep it to put on the market to sell.

Mendoza was part of a team of Carpenter Union staffers who have been aggressively organizing largely Latino workers in the Pacific Northwest. "We've been told this (home raids and arrests) is happening to a lot of union organizers across the country," Savage said.

Contributions to the "Luis Mendoza Solidarity Fund" can be made at any branch of US Bank. Checks can also be mailed to US Bank at 636 SE Grand Ave., Portland OR 97214. Checks must be made out to the "Luis Mendoza Solidarity Fund."

## Labor to rally for Kulongoski on Saturday, Oct. 14

A labor rally for Ted Kulongoski will be held at 10 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 14, at the campaign headquarters of the Democratic governor.

Linda Chavez Thompson, vice president of the national AFL-CIO, and Bill Lucy, secretary-treasurer of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees have been invited to attend.

Gov. Kulongoski will speak at the rally.

Immediately following the event union volunteers will visit union households in the area.

The Kulongoski campaign head-



## Coal miners handbill Portland

Judy O'Connor, executive secretary-treasurer of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council, joins officials from the United Mine Workers of America and the national AFL-CIO Sept. 19 leafleting the Oregon Convention Center during a meeting of the Northwest Public Power Association. The target was keynote speaker Fredrick Palmer, senior vice president of Peabody Energy, the world's largest private-sector coal company. The UMW is seeking card-check recognition in an organizing campaign at 21 Peabody mines involving some 2,300 miners, mostly in the Midwest. More and more unions are employing the "card-check" method when organizing, to avoid oftentimes adversarial campaigns when using the National Labor Relations Board. Union officials say election campaigns can drag on for months, giving companies the opportunity to harass and intimidate employees into not joining a union. Pictured from left to right are Dave Eckstein of the national AFL-CIO, O'Connor, Bob Kendrick of the UMW, and Bob Gaydos, deputy director of organizing for the union. Nearly two dozen Portland-area union members helped leaflet. Several members handed out fliers inside the conference room before being asked to leave. The NWPPA is an organization of 148 companies that are allied with the electric utility industry. Palmer was there pitching the value of coal for future energy needs. "We're here letting potential customers know of the problems at Peabody," Gaydos said.

quarters is located at 128 NE 7th Ave. (off Davis), Portland.

awards or the health care conference, call Burton White at 503-590-3535.

## Nominations are sought for awards in labor relations

The Oregon Chapter of the Labor and Employment Relations Association (LERA) is soliciting nominations to honor individuals in labor relations, including union leaders, managers, academics and others devoted to excellence in labor-management relations.

The awards will be presented at a reception following LERA's conference "Crisis in Health Care: What Are We Doing About?" to be held Wednesday, Nov. 15, at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland.

Individuals honored will have demonstrated commitment to the collective bargaining process, integrity, and involvement in the labor relations community. Two awards are open for union members, one for an officer, business agent or attorney and one for a steward who administers a collective bargaining agreement.

For nomination forms, e-mail [OregonLERA@aol.com](mailto:OregonLERA@aol.com). The deadline to submit nominations is Thursday, Oct. 26. For more information about the

## SEIU president Stern in Portland to promote new book

Andy Stern, president of the second largest union in America, will be in Portland Oct. 17, making several public appearances and talking about his recently published book.

In his book, "A Country That Works: Getting America Back on Track," Stern, president of 1.8-million-member Service Employees International Union (SEIU), gives his account of the debate that led SEIU to leave the AFL-CIO last year. It also describes his strategies for American unions to respond to globalization and a changing business environment.

Stern will appear Oct. 17 at Powell's City of Books on W. Burnside at noon, and at the Lucky Labrador pub at 1945 NW Quimby at 7 p.m. He will also meet with members of SEIU Locals 503 and 49 in the afternoon.

And the day prior (Oct. 16) he'll be a guest at 8 a.m. on the Thom Hartmann show, 690-AM, and at 6 p.m. on Labor Radio, KBOO 90.7 FM.



## UFCW leaflets new nonunion grocer

About a dozen members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555, including Stuart Fishman, above, leafleted the Sept. 20 grand opening of Save-A-Lot at 6828 SE Foster Road in Portland to let shoppers know the employer doesn't have a union contract. The discount grocer will open 25 to 30 stores in the Pacific Northwest over the next year. A store at 6100 SE King Rd. Milwaukie, also opened the same day. Save-A-Lot is one of a number of grocery chains owned by Minnesota-headquartered SuperValu Inc., which bought the Boise-based Albertsons chain in June of this year. Since then, Albertsons has closed six of its least profitable stores in the Portland area. Most of the some 300 union employees at the stores were transferred to other locations, as called for in the Local 555 contract. Save-A-Lot stores are typically 15,000 square feet and have 15 to 20 employees each. While Save-A-Lot has operations in 39 states, most of its 1,154 stores are in the Midwest. None are unionized.

# ...New Yorker drops millions in two Oregon ballot measures

(From Page 1)

recent campaign finance report, Oct. 2, showed at least \$30,000 more.

"My question would be, 'Has he ever set foot in Oregon?'" said Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain. "The thing about Oregonians which folks on the East Coast don't understand is we hate being told what to do."

Similar sentiments prompted Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer to challenge Rich to a debate. Rich decline to respond. Montana is one of the states where Rich's measures circulated. The measures qualified for the ballot, but were disqualified after the Montana Supreme Court found a pattern of widespread fraud in signa-

ture gathering efforts.

While there's no evidence of a similar degree of fraud in Oregon this time, critics of the two Oregon measures say the measures wouldn't have qualified for the ballot without Rich's riches.

"There's no support for Measure 48 from the grass roots," said Becca Uherbelau, spokesperson for Defend Oregon, a coalition of over 100 labor and community groups that formed to oppose Measure 48 and Measure 41, which would cut income taxes, mostly for the wealthiest.

While Rich is very private and hardly ever grants press interviews, a group called Ballot Initiative Strategy Center put together enough research

on him to publish a Web site — [howierichexposed.com](http://howierichexposed.com) — that points up a close relationship between Rich and many other well-funded far-right groups and causes, including campaigns to privatize Social Security; the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth campaign to discredit John Kerry; the conservative "free market" think-tank Cato Institute; the vehemently anti-union National Alliance for Workers

and Employers Rights; Grover Norquist's group Americans for Tax Reform; and the Club for Growth, a conservative group targeting Republicans who are perceived as too moderate.

How will Oregonians vote on the two measures if Rich funds a flurry of TV ads? Uherbelau says its plausible that Rich may have waited until after the reporting period to make his next

large deposit of cash into the Oregon campaign organizations. That won't be known until the next reports are due, shortly before the deadline for mail-in ballots.

For more information about the November 2006 election, look to the Oct. 20 issue of the Northwest Labor Press, in print and online at [www.nwlabornpress.org](http://www.nwlabornpress.org).

## Fire Fighters, 18 other unions establish sportsmen's group

TORONTO (PAI) — The Fire Fighters and 18 other unions are setting up their own union-based group to appeal to hunters, fishermen and women, and other outdoor sports enthusiasts.

The new Union Sportsmen's Association will build on alliances that many unions have with the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP), delegates to the IAFF convention in Toronto decided.

Both the TRCP and the new group will "unite union men and women who share a common interest in hunting, fishing and shooting" and will focus "on conserving, maintaining and enhancing access to land and water available to the general public," the Fire Fighters Union said. The unions will pay, through TRCP, proportionate start-up costs for the first two years of the new group. After that, it will be on its own.

Besides that initial funding commitment, details of the new association are still being worked out between the unions that will co-sponsor the new group, said Fire Fighters President Harold Schaitberger.

The new association will provide goods, gear, a dedicated sportsman's club with its own magazine, a Web site and an affinity program to promote

union-made products and equipment and offer merchandise and sports trips to union member. Schaitberger says 70 percent of his union's members hunt, fish, camp or participate in other outdoor activities.

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# OFFICIAL NOTICES

## Asbestos Workers 36

Executive Board meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 11. Members meet 8 p.m. Friday, Oct. 13. Meetings are at 11145 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

## Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers 114

Executive Board meets 10 a.m. Tuesday, Oct. 24, followed by a 10:30 a.m. General Membership meeting, at 7931 NE Halsey, Suite 102, Portland. **PLEASE NOTE:** An executive board position will be filled at this meeting. Interested persons are asked to contact the local union office.

## Boilermakers 500

Members meet 10 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 14, at 2515 NE Columbia Blvd., Portland.

## Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers 1

Members meet 7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 17, at 12812 NE Marx St., Portland.

## Carpenters 1715

Members meet 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 17, preceded by a 5 p.m. Executive Board meeting at 612 E. McLoughlin, Vancouver, Wash.

## Cement Masons 555

Members meet 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 19, at 12812 NE Marx St., Portland.

## Clark, Skamania & W. Klickitat Counties Labor Council

Delegates meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 26, preceded by an Executive Board meeting, at the ILWU Local 4 Hall, 1205 Ingalls St., Vancouver, Wash.

## Columbia-Pacific Building Trades

Delegates meet 10 a.m. Tuesdays, Oct. 10 and Oct. 17, at Kirkland Union Manor II, 3535 SE 86th, Portland.

## Electrical Workers 48

Marine Unit meets 5 p.m. Monday, Oct. 23. Residential Unit meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 11. General membership meets 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 25, preceded by a 5:30 p.m. pre-meeting buffet.

Wasco PUD meets 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 11, at the Wasco PUD, 2345 River Rd., The Dalles.

Coast Unit meets 7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 11, at Astoria Labor Temple, 926 Duane St., Astoria.

EWMC meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 11, in the Executive Boardroom.

Sound & Communication Unit meets 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 18.

Electrical Women of Local 48 meet 6 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 17, at NIETC, 16021 NE Airport Way.

Executive Board meets 6:30 p.m. Wednesdays, Oct. 18 and Nov. 8.

Bylaws Committee meets 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 24, in the Executive Boardroom.

Meetings are at 15937 NE Airport Way, Portland, unless otherwise noted.

**DEATH ASSESSMENTS:** The following death assessments have been declared for Oct. and are payable at 50 cents each: No. 2119, Arthur E. Cloutier; No. 2120, Jack C. Applegate; No. 2121, Dewey D. Dills; and No. 2122, Gary A. Thompson.

## Electrical Workers 280

Bend Unit meets 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 12, at the IBEW/UA Training Center, 2161 SW First St., Redmond.

Joint Unit meets 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 19, at the Central Electrical Training Center, Tangent.

Executive Board meets 1 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 1, at 32969 Hwy. 99E, Tangent.

## Elevator Constructors 23

Members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 12, preceded by a 5:30 p.m. Executive Board meeting, at 12779 NE Whitaker Way, Portland. **PLEASE NOTE:** Nominations of officers will be held at this meeting.

## Exterior & Interior Specialists 2154

Members meet 5 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 18, at 1125 SE Madison, Suite 207, Portland.

## Fire Fighters 1660

Members meet 8 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 12, at the Union Hall, 4411 SW Sunset Dr, Lake Oswego.

## Glass Workers 740

Eugene area members meet 5 p.m. Monday, Oct. 9, at Best Western Grand Manor Inn, 971 Kruse Way, Springfield.

Salem area members meet 5 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 10, at Candalaria Terrace, Suite 204, 2659 Commercial St. SE, Salem.

## Iron Workers 29

Members meet 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 19, at 11620 NE Ainsworth Cir., #200, Portland.

## Iron Workers Shopmen 516

Executive Board meets 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 12, at 11620 NE Ainsworth Cir., #300, Portland.

## Labor Roundtable of Southwest Washington

Delegates meet 8 a.m. Friday, Oct. 13, at Hometown Buffet, 7809-B Vancouver Plaza Dr., Vancouver, Wash.

## Laborers 483 Municipal Employees

Members meet 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 17, at the Musicians Hall, 325 NE 20th Ave., Portland.

## Laborers/Vancouver 335

There will be no meeting in Oct., meetings resume in Nov.

## Linoleum Layers 1236

Portland area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 26, at 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

## Marion-Polk-Yamhill Labor Council

Executive Board meets 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 10, followed by a 7 p.m. general meeting at SEIU Local 503, 1730 Commercial St. SE, Salem.

## Metal Trades Council

Executive Board meets 8 a.m. Monday, Oct. 9, at NOLC board room, 1125 SE Madison, Portland.

Delegates meet 5 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 24, at IBEW Local 48 Hall, 15937 NE Airport Way, Portland.

## Mid-Columbia Labor Council

Delegates meet 7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 10, at 3313 W. 2nd, The Dalles.

## Millwrights & Machinery Erectors 711

Members meet 10 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 28, preceded by a 9 a.m. Executive Committee meeting, at the Carpenters Local 247 Hall, 2205 N. Lombard St., Portland.

## Molders 139

Members meet 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 19, preceded by a 6 p.m. Executive Board meeting at the Carpenters Hall, 2205 N. Lombard, Portland. **PLEASE NOTE:** Nominations of officers will be held at the regular meeting 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 16, at the Local Hall, 2205 N. Lombard, #103, Portland. If there are no contests, the officers will be declared elected at the meeting according to the Local bylaws. If there is a contest, the election of officers will be held on Thursday, Dec. 21, from 7 a.m. until 6:30 p.m.

## Multnomah County Employees 88

General membership meets 7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 18, preceded by a 6 p.m. stewards' meeting.

Executive Board meets 6:15 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 1, at the AFSCME union office.

Meetings are held at 6025 E. Burnside St.

## Northwest Oregon Labor Council

Delegates meet 7 p.m. Monday, Oct. 23, at IBEW Local 48 Hall, 15937 NE Airport Way, Portland.

## Operating Engineers 701

District 1 members meet 8 p.m. Friday, Oct. 6, at Gladstone Union Hall, 555 E. First St., Gladstone.

District 3 members meet 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 10,

at North Bend/Coos Bay Labor Center, 3427 Ash St., North Bend.

District 5 members meet 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 11, at Gladstone Union Hall, 555 E. First St., Gladstone.

District 3 members meet 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 12, at Courtyard Marriott, 600 Airport Rd., Medford.

District 3 members meet 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 18, at The Riverhouse, 3075 N. Hwy. 97, Bend.

District 2 members meet 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 19, at the Marriott Residence Inn, 25 Club Rd., Eugene.

## Painters & Drywall Finishers 10

Members meet 7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 18, at 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

## Pile Drivers, Divers & Shipwrights 2416

Members meet 7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 27, preceded by a 6 p.m. Executive Board meeting, at 2205 N. Lombard, #10, Portland.

## Roofers & Waterproofers 49

Members meet 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 12. Executive Board meets 7 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 2. Meetings are at 5032 SE 26th Ave., Portland. (Phone: 503 232-4807)

## Sheet Metal Workers 16

Portland members meet 6 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 10, at the Sheet Metal Training Center, 2379 NE 178th Ave., Portland.

Medford area members meet 5 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 11, at Abby's Pizza, 7480 Crater Lake Hwy., White City.

Eugene area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 12, at UA #290 Hall, 1174 Gateway Loop, Springfield, preceded by a VOC meeting.

Coos Bay area meeting has been canceled in Oct.

Portland area VOC meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 1, at the Sheet Metal Training Center, 2379 NE 178th Ave., Portland.

## Sign Painters & Paint Makers 1094

Members meet 1:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. Monday, Oct. 16, in the District Office, at 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

## Southern Oregon Central Labor Council

Delegates meet 6 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 10, at the Labor Temple, 4480 Rogue Valley Hwy. #3, Central Point.

## United Association 290

Portland area members meet 7:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 20, at 20210 SW Teton Ave., Tualatin.

Astoria area members meet 6 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 25, at the Astoria Labor Temple, 926 Duane, Astoria.

Bend area members meet 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 24, at the Local 290 Training Center, 2161 SW First, Redmond.

Brookings area members meet 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 31, at Curry County Search and Rescue, 517 Railroad St., Brookings.

Coos Bay area members meet 7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 24, at the Coos Bay Training Center, 2nd & Kruse, Coos Bay.

Eugene area members meet 6:30 p.m. Monday, Oct. 23, at the Springfield Training Center.

Klamath Falls area members meet 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 24, at the Moose Lodge, 1577 Oak Ave., Klamath Falls.

Medford area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 26, at 650A Industrial Circle, White City.

Roseburg area members meet 5 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 26, at the Roseburg Labor Temple, 742 SE Roberts, Roseburg.

Salem area members meet 6 p.m. Monday, Oct. 23, at 1810 Hawthorne Ave. NE, Salem.

The Dalles area members meet 6 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 24, at the United Steelworkers Local 9170 Union Hall, The Dalles.

Humboldt-Del Norte Co. area members meet 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 25, at the Eureka Training Center, 832 E St., Eureka, Calif.

## USW 1097

Members meet 4 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 18, preceded by a 3 p.m. Executive Board meeting at the union's building at 91237 Old Mill Town Rd., Westport.

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# RETIREE MEETING NOTICES

### ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED AMERICANS OREGON CHAPTER

Executive Board meets 10 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 12, in the Northwest Oregon Labor Council board room, at 1125 SE Madison, Portland. Retirees meet 10 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 26, at Westmoreland Union Manor, 6404 SE 23rd Ave., Portland. All retirees are welcome to attend.

### CARPENTERS

Retired Carpenters meet for lunch 11 a.m. Monday, Oct. 9, at JJ North's Grand Buffet, 10520 NE Halsey, Portland.

### ELECTRICAL WORKERS 48

Retirees, wives and friends meet 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, Oct. 10, at 102nd and E. Burnside, Portland, for a trip on MAX, going through the underground tunnel, to Hillsboro. Senior fare is 85 cents. We will enjoy a no-host lunch there, before returning on MAX. For

further information and reservations, please call Vera Larson at 503 252-2296.

### ELEVATOR CONSTRUCTORS 23

Retirees meet noon Tuesday, Oct. 10, at Kirkland Union Manor, Portland. **PLEASE NOTE CORRECTED LOCATION.**

### GLASS WORKERS 740

Retirees meet 11 a.m. Tuesday, Oct. 17, at JJ North's Grand Buffet, 10520 NE Halsey, Portland.

### LINOLEUM, CARPET, SOFT TILE APPLICATORS 1236

Retirees meet 11:30 a.m. Friday, Oct. 13, at JJ North's Grand Buffet, 10520 NE Halsey, Portland.

### NORTHWEST OREGON LABOR RETIREES COUNCIL

Business meeting from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Monday, Oct. 9, in the North-

west Oregon Labor Council board room, at 1125 SE Madison, #100G, Portland.

### OREGON AFSCME

Retirees meet 10 a.m. Tuesday, Oct. 17, at the AFSCME office, 6025 E. Burnside, Portland. Call Michael Arken for information at 503 -239-9858.

### SHEET METAL 16

Retirees meet 11:30 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 12, at Village Inn, 10301 SE Stark St., for an informal, low-key luncheon, **EVERYONE IS WELCOME.** For more information, please call 503 256-2380.

### UNITED ASSOCIATION 290

Retirees meet 10 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 19, at 20210 SW Teton Ave., Tualatin.

# Sen. Gordon Smith sees eventual health care change

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) — The aging of the “Baby Boomers” will force Congress to confront the twin crises in the U.S. health care system — declining availability and rising cost of health insurance — say two senators who are crafting legislation

on the issue.

But since the Baby Boomers are now only starting to retire, the two said on Sept. 21, nothing much may happen before 2008, if then.

“The health care issue is ripening, but it’s not ripe,” said Senate Aging

Committee Chairman Gordon Smith (R-Ore.) in an interview after the session. “It’ll be ripe when the public demands we come up with a different formula to solve it,” he said.

That demand will start with the 2008 election, he predicted “when the Baby Boomers start really showing up on the rolls” of Medicare and Medicaid. “All governments will get squeezed. The changes will be driven by demographics,” Smith said.

The session, hosted by the New America Foundation, discussed the future role of private business in the health care system. Smith and Sen. Blanche Lambert Lincoln (D-Ark.) both made the point that the vast majority of people in the U.S. get their health care coverage through private businesses — and both said they’re leery of switching.

But they also noted health care costs are rising, that businesses are eliminating health insurance or forcing workers to shoulder more of its burdens and that a record number of people, almost 47 million, are uninsured.

Further, said Smith, many businesses would give up health care coverage if they could. His family frozen foods business, which employs 400 unionized Teamsters year-round and 600-800 seasonal workers during times of high harvests and production, has found that health care is the Number One topic at the bargaining table.

“I’d gladly give up the money we paid for health care, and give them a

10 percent raise, and say ‘Thank you for taking it off my hands,’” he said. Most businesses would gladly do the same, he stated.

The Teamsters — like other unions in talks nationwide — refuses, for good reason. “They want certainty and they’re willing to leave wages flat as long as they get pensions and health care preserved,” Smith said of his family business’ bargaining with the union.

And he disagreed with Service Employees International Union President Andrew Stern, who said the system is broken and needs replacement. Stern’s union is the largest health care workers union. Smith, by contrast, says the employer-based system “can be salvaged.”

Lincoln pointed out that many workers do not want to give up the present system, despite its holes and hazards.

“They’re fearful of being left to a marketplace that won’t provide them with a quality product at a price they can afford,” Lincoln said of a revised system. And they’re not sure a government-run system would not lead to rationing, Smith said.

The catch is, there is rationing in the present system already, by price, the senators said. And the present health care system also isn’t entirely rational, Lincoln noted.

By contrast, a decade ago, Oregon instituted its own Oregon Health Care system as a federally-approved plan

for Medicaid recipients. Smith, then a state senator, supported it while then-state Senator John Kitzhaber (D), an M.D., drafted it.

Oregon’s system covers a higher percentage of Medicaid recipients than any other states, Smith said, but lines up health procedures in order of priority — the top 300 — and limits spending on each set of procedures. He said it could be a model for the country, but that it needs more flexibility in deciding which procedures to pay for or not.

Lincoln noted individuals “can’t negotiate for themselves” with health insurers. While Smith is working on catastrophic care legislation, Lincoln is crafting a bill to let people and small businesses join the federal workers’ health care pool.

There, “for 40 years,” the Office of Personnel Management has used the weight of numbers to negotiate lowest prices for procedures and drugs, she said. “It’s got 25 to 30 options” for health insurance coverage, Lincoln said of OPM’s menu of plans, which is also available to lawmakers and their families. “It allows you the opportunity to provide everything at a lower price.”



## Gephardt visits Operators’ conference

Mark Holliday (right), business manager of Operating Engineers Local 701, poses for photo with Dick Gephardt, former Missouri congressman and Democratic Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives, during an unscheduled appearance at the annual Western Conference of Operating Engineers held the week of Sept. 11 at the Benson Hotel in Portland. The keynote speaker at the conference, which attracted nearly 150 operators from 13 states, was Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski. General President of the Operating Engineers Vincent Gibling opened the gathering with a moment of silence to honor the 47 stationary engineers who lost their lives at the World Trade Center on 9/11. In honor of the dead, local firefighters marched through the assembly to the tune of “Amazing Grace” played by a local bagpiper. The tragedy pre-empted the Western Conference in Seattle exactly five years ago, just as that meeting began, and participants gathered in the hotel lobby to watch incoming television news reports about the terrorist bombings.

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# Education Department, Head Start, others brace for federal budget cuts

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The U.S. Labor and Education Departments and Head Start are going to get their budgets cut again — if and when the Republican-led Congress moves ahead with an appropriations bill that has been dormant since July.

In anticipation of the cuts, the Oregon Employment Department closed the downtown Portland employment office and planned to cut 82 positions (6 percent of its workforce) over the next year. About 70 percent of its budget comes from federal funds.

The looming cuts prompted a last-minute appeal by the Emergency Campaign for America's Priorities (ECAP), a national ad hoc coalition of unions and community groups, which is calling on Congress to restore funding.

Each year, Congress approves the federal budget through 13 separate appropriations bills that cover different parts of the federal government. The one ECAP has been watching would allocate \$56.2 billion to Labor, Health & Human Services and Education. That's a \$400 million cut from this year's budget, and \$1 billion less than last year's. The impact is worse when inflation is taken into account.

Within the Department of Labor, the budget cuts include: A \$10 million cut to the Wage and Hour Division, which enforces minimum wage, overtime and child labor laws; a \$27.8 million cut in Trade Adjustment Assistance — the job training and income support program for workers who lose their jobs due to outsourcing or foreign competition; a

50 percent (\$5 million) cut in a program that funds safety training by unions and community-based groups; a \$2.1 million cut in coal mine enforcement, and a \$431 million in cuts to Workforce Investment Act programs.

Within the Department of Education, some programs will have their budgets frozen, including Head Start; programs and services for military families; and vocational training grants to states. Some programs will have their budgets cut, including No Child Left Behind, the Bush Administration's signature education initiative. Next year's budget for No Child Left Behind is \$23 billion, \$1.5 billion less than last year's. That means less money for grants to

help schools recruit, hire and train highly-qualified teachers to meet teacher quality requirements and reduce class sizes.

Congress is supposed to pass the federal budget before the Oct. 1 beginning of the federal government's fiscal year, but sometimes it fails to meet that deadline and passes a "continuing resolution" — basically it's an agreement to continue spending at current levels until the final budget is worked out. Some of the current round of cuts could have had political consequences for members of Congress up for re-election, so it's expected that the leadership will wait until after the November election to vote on the budget bill.

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## ...Volunteer bus driver

(From Page 1)

Machinist, a member of a Railway Clerks Union, a Teamster truck driver, and finally an ATU-represented bus driver at TriMet. But he says he was one of those members who didn't want his dues money going to anything but representing existing members; now he sees unionizing nonunion workplaces as essential to protect the well-being of all workers.

"It was like a light bulb went on," Fain said.

"A lot of people in unionized jobs are complacent," Fain said. "If everyone could get involved and do something, I think the unions and the country would be better off."

In four years of volunteering at the Bus Project, Fain says he's gotten to meet Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski, former governors John Kitzhaber and Barbara Roberts, many local politicians and an immense network of volunteers.

He's become a regular caller on the

Thom Hartmann Show, a progressive talk radio program that airs 6 to 9 a.m. weekdays on 620 AM.

A former Marine, Fain now helps sustain a weekly peace vigil in Washington County that began a year ago August.

And he credits the Bus Project for his transformation.

"It's energized me," Fain said. "It was a chance to meet people and do things I would never have done."

The inspiration is mutual, say others at the Bus Project. Downen said Fain was one of a few people without whom the Bus Project would not have gotten off the ground.

"With us, he's a legend," Downen said.

The group, which works hard to give volunteers thanks and acknowledgment, will honor Fain by emblazoning his face on a T-shirt to be worn by volunteers on an Oct. 7 canvass. The bus leaves from the east side of Grant High School at 9 a.m.

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# Labor ponders which direction AOI will go

The business lobbying group Associated Oregon Industries has installed a new president, leaving local labor leaders to wonder what direction the group will take politically.

Jay Clemens, who took over Oct. 1, was president of the Tulsa Metro Chamber of Commerce in Oklahoma for the last eight years. Before that, he headed the Bremerton, Wash., Chamber of Commerce; managed financial operations for the Association of Washington Businesses; and served 13 years as president of the Boise Area Chamber of Commerce in Idaho.

In Oklahoma, Clemens served on the steering committee of the successful 2001 referendum to make Oklahoma a "right-to-work" state. Twenty-two states, mostly in the South and Southwest, are dubbed "right to work" because they prohibit unions from making membership (and paying dues) a condition of employment — although the worker still gets the contract benefits. In what was considered a major blow to unions, 54 percent of Oklahoma voters approved the constitutional amendment.

On other issues, Clemens worked in concert with local unions, most notably a \$885 million sales-tax-funded development plan called Vision 2025 that included: \$183 million to build an arena (Tulsa hopes to attract a professional sports team when the arena is completed in 2008); \$22 million in subsidies to Oklahoma's largest employer, American Airlines, to keep the company from moving its 8,000-job maintenance hub to another state; and a \$350 million package of incentives to get Boeing to build its new 7E7 commercial aircraft in Tulsa (Boeing passed on the subsidy).

Clemens also worked with labor on

fundraising campaigns for United Way.

Contacted by the NW Labor Press, Clemens copped to backing Oklahoma's right-to-work campaign, along with nearly the entire business community of the state, though he said it was the governor, and not business, that raised the issue. Clemens said he's still learning Oregon's business priorities, but doesn't think a right-to-work law is one of them. [A right-to-work ballot initiative has been filed for the 2008 election, one of a slew of anti-union measures introduced by longtime union foe Bill Sizemore.]

AOI, which bills itself "the voice of business in the Legislature," is proposing a sales tax as the answer to the state's budget woes, and has continually advocated business and capital gains tax cuts while opposing union calls to increase the \$10 a year minimum corporate income tax. AOI has also called for contracting out state services.

Despite those positions, former Oregon AFL-CIO president Tim Nesbitt said the union federation managed over the years to have a working relationship with AOI based on mutual convenience.

"We disagree on more issues than not, but we agree to work together on issues of agreement," he said.

During the most recent recession, AOI joined the AFL-CIO in calling for unemployment insurance extensions.

Nesbitt's successor Tom Chamberlain said the state federation has continued to have "a reasonably good relationship" with AOI. This year, AOI went on record opposing Ballot Measure 48, an initiative on the November ballot that would limit state government spending. Opposing the measure is a high priority for Oregon labor unions.

Think Again • By Tim Nesbitt



## The 'monkey in the middle'- class squeeze

"Being middle class these days is like being stuck in a game of 'monkey in the middle,' in which the rich get all the tax breaks and the poor get all the services, and we're stuck between them playing by the rules and never getting our hands on the ball."

That's not a quote I heard from a focus group; it's my composite summary of sentiments that I have gleaned from observations on the campaign trail this year. And, it's a sentiment that has a lot to teach those of us who are struggling to reconnect working-family voters with candidates who will fight for their interests.

First, there's the analysis of what troubles working families. If we get that right, we are more likely to fashion a political agenda that can appeal to the large majority of middle-class America.

It's not so much the middle-class speed-up — that we're working harder and smarter but getting less and less for our efforts. We've been using that analysis for years now, with little resonance.

Nor is it "the undeclared war against the middle class," that subtitled Thom Hartmann's new book and sets us up for competing charges of class warfare. Most working families don't buy that analysis.

And only tangentially is it the loss of opportunity, although the sense that our children will have a harder time making it in the work world is closer to the core of today's working family angst.

Rather, at the heart of that angst are the insecurity and resentment that come from a middle-class squeeze that I fear most working families perceive as the economic equivalent of "monkey in the middle."

What's most disturbing about this perception is its view of government — not just as an entity that is unable to make a positive difference in mid-

dle class lives, but as an agent that is making things worse.

We are used to blaming the anti-government right-wingers for a decades-long assault on government that has created the cynicism we now confront toward taxes and services. But we can't continue to defend the indefensible, even if the right-wingers are to blame for it.

Our tax system is unfair, and many critical government services are unfairly limited to the working poor. Here are a few examples.

Three decades ago, businesses paid half the total taxes at the state and local level in Oregon. By 1990, the business share had fallen to a little over 40 percent. Now it's about 25 percent.

Three decades ago, you could work your way through the University of Oregon by working at a minimum wage job full time during the summer and part time during the school year. Now you would have to work 48 hours a week year-round to cover a full year at the same university. The state's financial aid for Oregon students is limited to those from families earning less than \$33,000 a year.

Three decades ago, most jobs provided health insurance for working people and their children. Now the state is providing health insurance for one of every four children in Oregon, the most ever. But there are still another 117,000 children without any health coverage at all — and more than 90 percent of them are in working families. Most of those families earn more than \$37,000 a year, which is the upper limit for kids in the Oregon Health Plan.

There was a telling exchange in the gubernatorial debate hosted by Oregon Public Broadcasting last week. Governor Ted Kulongoski argued that it was government's responsibility to step in and provide health insurance for children when

necessary. His challenger, Ron Saxton, argued that we should let the private sector solve that problem. "You give them (working families) better paying jobs," said Saxton, "then we worry about those left over."

"Those left over" nowadays are increasingly those with jobs, who can't afford to pay more taxes and aren't getting much help from their government. But would they vote for Kulongoski's plan to raise the corporate minimum tax to fund Head Start and expand college aid to middle-income families? Would they support Kulongoski's proposal to equalize Oregon's tobacco taxes with those in Washington state to provide affordable health insurance options to the children of all working families?

Saxton says Kulongoski's proposals make him a tax-and-spend politician. Kulongoski says Saxton is turning his back on working families. And middle class voters, like monkeys in the middle, are looking back and forth, trying to decide.

The key to success for Kulongoski and other pro-worker candidates in this election is to combine an appeal to class-based tax fairness with concrete proposals to provide much-needed help for hard-working middle class families — starting with education and health care first and foremost.

"Tax fairly, spend wisely" is a good start, but it doesn't go far enough. We need to tax fairly and spend wisely on the kinds of programs that can bolster working families and restore the middle class of this country. Politically, we cannot do one without the other. And, if we don't do both, America's middle class will become the leftovers.

(Disclosure: I am temporarily serving as a political adviser to the Kulongoski for Governor campaign.)

Tim Nesbitt is a former president of the Oregon AFL-CIO.





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# Jim Bledsoe dies of cancer at age 73; longtime leader in Carpenters Union

The International Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners lost a longtime leader with the death of James S. Bledsoe on Sept. 9 in Longview, Wash., following a 10-year battle with cancer. He was 73.

Bledsoe first joined the Lumber and Sawmill Workers union in 1952 when he went to work at the Fir-Tex sawmill in St. Helens, Ore. Shortly after going to work there the crew voted to strike. During that two-year strike he showed leadership skills and four years later he was elected to the top office of the Portland Coast Columbia District Council.

In 1959 he helped negotiate the formation of a multi-employer health and welfare trust with the major forest products companies.

Bledsoe was elected executive secretary treasurer of the Western Council Lumber and Sawmill Workers in 1972. He made health care a central fixture throughout his career.

"Jim was always a step ahead of many in anticipating changes in health care," said Mike Pieti, executive secretary treasurer of the newly-created Carpenters Industrial Council.

The health care trust was renamed the Bledsoe Health Trust in 2001 to honor his commitment to delivering



JIM BLEDSOE

comprehensive medical care to members, their families and to retirees.

Bledsoe led the Western Council in 1983 when workers at 15 Louisiana-Pacific lumber mills went on strike — a battle that ground on for more than two years.

Bledsoe shepherded many successful L-P strike-related legal cases before the National Labor Relations Board during one of the most difficult decades for workers in recent times.

Bledsoe was persuaded to come out of retirement in 1990 to chair the Forest Products Bargaining Board and then was elected general treasurer of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters in 1991. During his four years in that post he put new systems in place to help safeguard the union's funds and protect assets of the membership. During his term, Bledsoe also oversaw the Brotherhood's

legislative and political affairs and was an early adherent to what is now called 'Carpenter Politics.' He helped shift the union's focus away from endorsements based purely on political party affiliation and toward an assessment of candidates based on Carpenters' issues.

"Jim had an immense impact on this union. Workers all across the country are better off today because of his intellect, his tenacity, his bargaining skills and his absolute dedication," Pieti concluded.

Bledsoe was born Dec. 25, 1932, in St. Helens, Ore., to Samuel and Minnie Olive Bledsoe. He graduated from Scappoose High School in 1950. He married Janice Noble on Feb. 23, 1951, in St. Helens. They lived in Warren, Ore., and Deer Island for more than 40 years before moving to Kelso, Wash., four years ago.

Bledsoe is survived by his wife, their six children, 16 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

The James Bledsoe Memorial Fund for Cancer Victims has been established to help working families with catastrophic medical bills not covered by insurance. Contributions can be sent to: Bank of the West; Attn. Ginger Reece; 401 SW 5th Avenue; Portland, OR 97204.

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# Let me say this about that

## ...Wood-carver champ

(From Page 2)

manuals for the floorcovering trade, including spelling-out the duties of the labor-management committee chairman.

**WOOD-CARVING** is one of talented Bill Wilkerson's avocations. He has carved busts of Indians wearing war feathers, fishermen with a creel and a dog, mountain men and various caricatures — all of them about 10 to 12 inches high. His carvings have won two first-place blue ribbons at Clark County Fairs in Southwest Washington, and many other awards throughout the Southwest. He teaches wood-carving to seniors at recreation centers in Southern California and Arizona while on winter sojourns with Karel.

Professional archery is another of Wilkerson's pursuits. He helped start the professional division of the National Field Archery Association, which sponsors tournaments for bow-and-arrow enthusiasts. He served for many years as the association's Northwest chairman. He was sponsored by Bear Archery Association.

**ANOTHER RECREATION** interest of Wilkerson's was competitive target-shooting with muzzle-loaders, which are rifles and pistols loaded with black powder. Due to an on-the-job injury and neck surgery, Wilkerson was forced to discontinue his archery and black-powder activities.

Bill also builds model railroads.

**KAREL WILKERSON** retired about the same time that Bill did. She worked for 20-plus years for the Department of Corrections in Vancouver, where she was a clerical supervisor. The Wilkersons spend much of their retirement time traveling in the American Southwest in their 36-foot recreational vehicle.

Bill and Karel have a son, Steve; a daughter, Andrea Perkins; and six grandchildren. Steve and son-in-law Noel Perkins are both employed at Studer's Floor Covering and are members of Local 1236.

★★★

### Kaufmans mark 70th wedding anniversary

Ralph Kaufman, a retired secretary-treasurer of Auto Mechanics Local Lodge 1005, and his wife, Solveig, celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on Sept. 6 at a gathering of family and friends at their assisted living residence in the Beaverton area. They were married on Sept. 6, 1936 in Zion, North Dakota. Among those



attending the celebration was a nephew, Wayne Burkhart, who was present at their wedding when he was age four. The Kaufmans have two sons, Murlan and Richard; five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Great-grandson Garrett Lindsey, who recently graduated from Penn State University, attended the celebration, as did grandson Dan Kaufman of Portland, a member of Musicians Local 99. Son Murlan lives in the Portland area; son Richard lives in Fallon, Nevada. It is sad to report that Mrs. Kaufman died of a stroke on Sept. 12. She was 93. Ralph will be 98 on Oct. 31. He is a member of the Labor Hall of Fame sponsored by the Northwest Oregon Labor Retirees Council. Local 1005 is affiliated with Portland-based Machinists District Lodge 24.

★★★

**MONROE SWEETLAND**, a leader in Oregon Democratic politics who also had experience in the labor movement, died at age 96 on Sept. 10 in Milwaukie and was honored at a memorial service on Sept. 30 at Portland State University.

He was a member of the Labor Hall of Fame.

**SWEETLAND WAS BORN** on Jan. 20, 1910 in Salem and grew up in Oregon and Michigan. After graduation from college in Ohio, he attended law schools in New York State. He married Lillie Megrath in 1931. She died in 1995. They had two daughters, Barbara Smith of Alaska and Rebecca Sweetland of Lake Oswego, who survive him; as do three granddaughters and a great-grandson.

In the 1930s he worked in the East for the Congress of Industrial Organizations; and in the mid-1960s after a political and newspaper ownership career in Oregon he moved to California to be a lobbyist for the National Education Association.

**HE WON ELECTION** from Clackamas County to the Oregon House of Representatives in 1952; later served in the Oregon Senate; ran twice for secretary of state, and played a key role in Democratic election victories for statewide and federal offices in the 1950s.

OPEN FORUM

## Kulongoski legacy: More than good roads

By JOHN MOHLIS

This summer, the nation celebrated 50 years since the Interstate Highway System opened new markets and possibilities for America's farmers, salespeople and dreamers.

Fifty years from now, Oregon will benefit from Gov. Ted Kulongoski's equally smart investments in bringing our state's transportation system into the 21st century.

As an advocate for sound public policy, I'm impressed by the governor's common-sense leadership in breaking longstanding gridlock in Salem. It wasn't easy to garner bipartisan support for two much-needed transportation bills.

And as a bricklayer who worked with tools on job sites for many years before taking on the job of representing thousands of Oregon working families in the construction trades, I'm equally proud of the men and women who will work hard in the coming decade to turn the governor's legislative victory into reality.

The two transportation packages — \$2.5 billion in 2003 to upgrade our roads and bridges, and another \$100 million in 2005 to modernize our ports, railways and aviation — will encourage growth, reduce the cost of congestion and inefficiency, and provide a gateway to the global economy.

And they make good sense: Consider an Oregon Department of Transporta-

tion report from three years ago. It showed that hundreds of our middle-aged concrete bridges have been weakened to the point that truckers with heavy loads are forced to waste time and gas finding alternate routes. The aging bridges could cost Oregon 88,000 jobs and \$123 billion in lost productivity over the next 20 years. In that light, 2003's \$2.5 billion upgrade passed to improve our roads and bridges is a bargain.

Gov. Kulongoski's subsequent ConnectOregon package last year dedicated another \$100 million without raising taxes. It uses lottery-backed bonds to improve the connection between highways and other transportation types, like railroads, airports, port facilities and public transit. The 43 recently-approved projects include more than \$4 million to the Port of Coos Bay for marine and rail improvements, an expansion of the Redmond airport's terminal, and a \$6.8 million improvement to the Ramsey Rail Yard in Portland.

More than 10,000 Oregon construction workers — operating engineers, cement masons and other skilled workers will be tapped to build this infrastructure. These workers will receive fair pay and health and retirement benefits for their work, thanks to Oregon's prevailing wage law. That means that they will not only have enough money to feed and clothe their families, but they will have cash in their pockets to shop on

Main Streets across Oregon. This is good news for small business owners and employees from Astoria to Ashland, and Portland to Pendleton.

Along with the governor's transportation commitments, several companies that he recruited to Oregon — including Genentech and Google, as well as a \$500 million commitment to build and improve Oregon's higher education buildings — are putting Oregon to work.

Three years ago, unemployment in the building crafts varied from 15 to 35 percent. Now, every craft is at full employment and starting new apprentices every month.

The governor has announced that if re-elected, he will work to pass ConnectOregon II: another \$100 million of lottery funds toward rail, aviation, transit and marine projects. He is also proposing another investment in our higher ed buildings. To be sure, in an age when American workers are losing their jobs to bad trade deals, Oregon's investment in our infrastructure is a wise one that will pay off both in the long run for our improved economy and education — and in the week-to-week sustenance of Oregon's hardworking families.

(Editor's Note: John Mohlis is executive secretary-treasurer of the Columbia-Pacific Building Trades Council, headquartered in Portland.)

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## Sheet Metal Workers had crucial role in building aerial tram

# Crew at Thompson Metal Fab in Vancouver worked long hours to keep tram construction on schedule

Months before the Portland Aerial Tram became visible from Interstate 5, a 100-person crew in Vancouver, Wash., was working around the clock fabricating the steel components for the upper station tower at Oregon Health and Science University and the intermediate tower located off SW Macadam Ave., in Portland.

That work crew represented some of the finest craftsmen and women at Sheet Metal Workers Local 16 — all of them employees at Thompson Metal Fab Inc.

Thompson played a somewhat unusual role as general contractor for both the fabrication and erection work. The company subcontracted the actual building of the towers to Carr Construction. (An article featuring the topping out of the upper station tower by members of Iron Workers Local 29 at Carr Construction was featured in the Sept. 15 issue of the NW Labor Press.)

“For the most part, fabrication went very well. Our guys did an outstanding job. There were very few glitches,” said John Rudi, president of Thompson Metal.

Design changes and coordination problems early on had put the tram project five weeks behind schedule. Once those issues were worked out, Thompson’s crew was able to make up ground so that by the time the upper station was topped out on Aug. 31, it was back on schedule for a tentative opening on Dec. 15.

The 196-foot intermediate tower (pictured above left) was built in three pieces — each with a complex series of welding challenges — the largest of which was the foot, measuring 90 feet long by 33 feet wide at the bottom and weighing 130 tons.



As the Daily Journal of Commerce noted, “The tower was built of five-eighths-inch plate steel with T-stiffeners attached inside to resist the heavy twisting loads that the tram will exert. Full penetration welds were used wherever the pieces of steel were spliced together.”

The upper station tower (pictured above) was even more complex, featuring four tiers and a steel superstructure on top. The footing required 78 drilled shafts averaging 70 feet long each and 1,500 cubic yards of concrete.

“It was a difficult fabrication project,” Rudi told the NW Labor Press. “It was very thick steel with a lot of heat input. It

required a lot of skill to hold the tolerances. There wasn’t a lot of room to make adjustments in the field. Our guys had to make it right in the shop.”

Curtis Anderson, field operations manager for Carr Construction, said the intermediate tower had to be within one inch of plumb. “We came in at a quarter-inch. I can’t say enough good things about the fabrication work.”

Mike Mayes, president of Mayes Testing Engineers, told the DJC that the tram project is one that “people swell up with pride thinking they were even involved. Portland doesn’t have an icon. I think this is going to be it.”



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