



NORTHWEST

LABOR  
PRESSVolume 114  
Number 5  
March 1, 2013  
Portland, Oregon

# Organized labor campaigns for immigration overhaul

By DON McINTOSH  
Associate Editor

Few topics are as touchy and divisive as immigration, and opportunities to reform U.S. immigration policy are rare. That's why, with President Obama and a group of U.S. senators proposing a package of reforms with bipartisan appeal, U.S. labor leaders are campaigning to make sure the reforms benefit workers, not just employers.

In mid-February, the national AFL-CIO held events with local labor leaders in 14 cities to promote labor's standards for reform. On Feb. 19, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) announced a \$250,000 nationwide Spanish language radio ad — the first in what it said would be a multi-week media and field campaign to win congressional enactment of immigration reform that includes a pathway to citizenship. And on Feb. 21, the AFL-CIO and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce jointly announced agreement on a set of common



To promote a union movement campaign for immigration reform, Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain stages a Feb. 19 press conference outside Portland's immigration office, alongside Francisco Lopez of the immigrant rights group CAUSA (left), and Brenda Mendoza (right) of the farmworker advocacy group PCUN.

principles for immigration reform.

Immigration has sizable labor market impacts. Industries with lots of immigrant workers can see wages fall, and the downward pressure is worse in the case of illegal immigrants, since their tenuous status leaves them more open to exploitation. The latest U.S. Census Bureau estimate is 40 million foreign-born residents out of a total U.S. population of 312 million. And 28.5 percent of the immigrants — 11.1 million — were unauthorized, having either entered illegally or overstayed visas. While the foreign-born are 12.8 percent of the overall population, immigrants make up 42 percent of the 1.6 million workers in farming, fishing, and forestry; 31 percent of the 8 million in building and grounds cleaning and maintenance; 23 percent of the 9.6 million in construction; 22 percent of the 4 million in computer and math occupations; 22 percent of the 11.1 million in manufacturing; and 20 percent of the

11.3 million food preparation and serving.

Re-establishing control over immigration is key to the compromise package being discussed in Washington, D.C. The package would include further increases in border control, and increased enforcement against employers who hire undocumented workers (while also making it easier for them to verify eligibility for employment). It would also include a process whereby the estimated 11.1 million illegal immigrants now in the United States could become legal permanent residents and ultimately attain the full rights of U.S. citizenship. And it would include a more efficient and sensible system for bringing in future immigrants to work.

The union position on these details is spelled out in an August 2009 joint statement of principles by the AFL-CIO and Change To Win labor federations. That statement outlines five key pieces:

(Turn to Page 5)

## SPEEA units reach split decision in Boeing contract votes

SEATTLE — Engineers and technical workers at The Boeing Co. returned a split decision in voting on new four-year contract offers. Engineers accepted their offer, and technical workers rejected theirs, while also giving their negotiation team authority to call a strike if necessary.

In votes tallied Feb. 19 by the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA) Local 2001, engineers in the Professional Unit accepted Boeing's offer 6,483 to 5,514. The Technical Unit rejected their offer 2,868 to 3,203 and granted strike authorization by a vote of 3,903 to 2,165.

The engineers (aerospace, electrical and other fields) and technical workers (designers, technical writers, planners and others) work on plans for new planes and solve problems that arise on the factory floor. The assembly of the planes is performed by members of the Machinists Union, which agreed to a four-year contract in 2011.

SPEEA, an affiliate of the International Federation of Professional & Technical Engineers, represents 22,950 employees at Boeing (15,550 engineers). Most work in the Puget Sound

region of Washington state, but the contracts also cover 200 employees at the Gresham plant in Oregon, as well as workers in Utah and California.

The union bargains contracts for the Professional Unit and Technical Unit at the same time, but the agreements are separate and independent from each other.

Negotiating teams from both units had recommended that workers reject the offers and support strike authorization.

SPEEA last struck Boeing in 2000 when all workers walked off the job for 40 days. That strike slowed airplane production to a crawl and prevented Boeing from delivering aircraft.

A key sticking point in the most recent bargaining has been Boeing's demand to switch new hires to a defined contribution pension plan, i.e., a 401(k). Union officials say the new retirement plan slashes benefits by 41 percent. Boeing's analysis shows a 33 percent cut.

"Pick your favorite analysis, or do one of your own; it's a significant cut in the retirement contribution," said SPEEA Executive Director Ray Goforth in a website video to members.

Boeing also refused to ensure existing employees their benefits would not be affected by changes to the Social Security cap on taxable income (scrap the cap) or raising the Medicare eligibility age to 70. Both are being considered by Congress and, according to union officials, would dramatically impact existing retirement packages.

"Interestingly, The Boeing Com-

pany has amended the executives' pension so that it is protected from 'scrap the cap,'" Goforth said. "We asked for similar protections for (members) and their answer was, 'why are you worrying about it; you don't need to worry about this.'"

Boeing did agree to extend most elements of the previous contracts, including 5 percent annual wage pools

and no increases to employees for medical coverage. Union officials said it was members' activism and their overwhelming rejection of the company's first contract proposals in October 2012 that forced Boeing to improve its offer.

SPEEA contracts expired Nov. 25, 2012. Negotiations started in Novem-

(Turn to Page 8)

## UFCW grocery workers ratify more contracts

Some 14,000 grocery workers, meatcutters and central checkout clerks at major supermarkets in Oregon and Southwest Washington have wrapped up voting on new three-year collective bargaining agreements.

Workers are represented by United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555. A 45-member Unity Bargaining Committee has been in negotiations for more than 22 months with Allied Employers Inc., a Kirkland, Washington-based firm that represents Fred Meyer and QFC (Kroger), Albertsons, and Safeway at the bargaining table.

It is the first time in the union's history that contracts from each geographic region within its jurisdiction — from Klamath Falls, Oregon, to Longview, Washington — were bargained simultaneously.

Voting began in early February and wrapped up Feb. 20 with the ratification of contracts in Klamath Falls, Tillamook, and Longview.

The union had scheduled a series of strike vote meetings for the month of February because employers had moved very little on their demands to increase the minimum waiting time to receive full health care coverage; to double the maximum out-of-pocket costs for family health insurance to \$12,000; and to schedule workers seven days a week without any days off or having to pay overtime, effectively eliminating the five-day work week.

The possibility of strike pushed the employer group to engage in a four-day, 68-hour marathon bargaining session starting Jan. 29. Those talks resulted in an offer the union was willing to take to its membership for a vote.

Local 555 Secretary-Treasurer Jeff Anderson told the Labor Press month that "This was some of the toughest bargaining in bad times that I've ever seen." Anderson is a 36-

(Turn to Page 4)



# Bricklayers Local 1 volunteers to build barbecue at Whiskey Creek Fish Hatchery

TILLAMOOK, Oregon — Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local 1 answered the call for volunteer bricklayers to help build a barbecue at Whiskey Creek Fish Hatchery.

The nonprofit Tillamook Anglers have been running the hatchery on Netarts Bay since the late 1980s. They completely restored it from its once dilapidated state and have been using it



Bricklayers Local 1 Business Agent Mike Titus (left) and Apprenticeship Coordinator Shawn Lenczowski place blocks on new barbecue.

not only to contribute to Tillamook area fisheries, but as a quasi-community center for classes, birthday parties, even weddings. The hatchery draws more than 120,000 visitors a year.

The Anglers host two big events each year — a fin clipping day in April and a fishing day for kids with disabilities in September. Both events attract 400 to 500 people and involve a barbecue lunch. The only problem: The hatchery doesn't have a barbecue.

"We would haul one in from the Creamery anytime we needed one," said Jerry Dove, president of the Tillamook Anglers. "A while back, one of our volunteers suggested that we have a permanent, built-in barbecue with a roof."

Dove said funds were quickly raised for materials. "All we needed was a bricklayer," he said.

Dove put the word out on the fishing blog *ifish.net*.

Matt Eleazer, business manager of Local 1, saw the posting and responded. "I fish, most of our members fish, and we know how to build brick barbecues," Eleazer said. "It's our way of giving back to the community."

On Feb. 7, Eleazer, Business Agent Mike Titus, and Apprenticeship Coordinator Shawn Lenczowski shared their expertise building the barbecue with half a dozen Tillamook Anglers who volunteered to help.

Dove said stainless steel grates and controls have been installed and the barbecue is ready to be fired up on fin clipping day, April 13.

For more information about the Tillamook Anglers, go to [www.ifish.net/Tillanglers.html](http://www.ifish.net/Tillanglers.html).

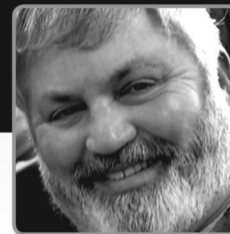


Matt Eleazer (right), business manager of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local 1, helps Dave Bauer, a volunteer with the Tillamook Anglers, lay the last cap on a built-in barbecue at the Whiskey Creek Fish Hatchery. The hatchery is located on Netarts Bay, two miles north of Cape Lookout State Park.



## Open Letter to Our TriMet Passengers and Community

TriMet management's recent threat to cut our passengers' service is unacceptable. We plan to do our part and negotiate a labor contract that is good for both our community and our families. But, our willingness to sacrifice will be for nothing unless someone starts to control management's spending.



Transit worker retirees: good neighbors active in our community

**OUR PASSENGERS ARE THE PEOPLE WE SEE NEARLY EVERY DAY.** We look forward to their kind words, great stories and being a small part of their lives. They need transportation to work, school, day care, medical appointments, grocery stores, family and friends. It is just not acceptable for management to spend millions on new furniture, downtown offices, unnecessary remodels, ever-growing train tracks, mirror-less train cars, dangerous buses, snoopy surveillance systems, razzle-dazzle electronic gadgets and wasteful rail service while, at the same time, threatening to leave our passengers stranded.

**We care deeply about our families, friends, passengers and community.**

**We want to do right by each and every one of them. You can help by staying informed and speaking out.**

**FINALLY, TRIMET RETIREES DESERVE OUR RESPECT AND GRATITUDE.** Many of them worked many years and yet their pension checks total less than \$1000 per month. These retirees gave their passengers loyal, faithful and caring service. Today, that same love of people has turned many of them into excellent community volunteers. It is unbelievable that a manager—someone who earns twice what our Governor earns, who received a \$6,450 raise, whose widow is promised lifetime health insurance and who is guaranteed a fat severance paycheck—thinks he has a moral right to criticize the very men and women who built TriMet.

Sincerely,  
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# Why I support immigration reform

By RICHARD TRUMKA  
AFL-CIO President

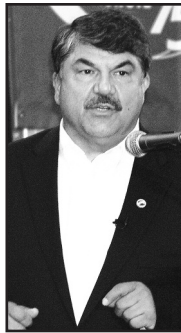
This is a good moment to explain why I feel so passionately about enacting immigration reform that provides a real pathway to citizenship for 11 million immigrants who call this country home.

You may know that until about a dozen years ago, the AFL-CIO did not support policies that give immigrants a route to citizenship; most unions saw those policies as a way for employers to find low-cost workers and push down wages. Our official policy changed in 2000, when we asserted that the AFL-CIO “proudly stands on the side of immigrant workers.”

Even today, I get mail and other comments criticizing me and the AFL-CIO for supporting reform, claiming that bringing immigrants out of the shadows will worsen the continuing jobs crisis. I know that good jobs are scarce and family pocketbooks are squeezed. Anxiety is natural. But I also believe those comments are misguided.

A century ago, America’s established unions, to a large extent, turned their backs on new immigrants as members, and were not welcoming to women, people of color, and millions of so-called unskilled industrial workers.

That has never sat well with me. When people use the word “immigrant”



like an epithet, I take it personally. I come from a small town in southwestern Pennsylvania’s coal country called Nemaquin. It was not easy when my family came to this country. My parents and grandparents fled poverty and war from different corners of Europe.

When I was a kid, there was an ugly

name for every one of us in all 12 languages spoken in Nemaquin — wop and Hunkey and Polack and kike. We were the last hired and first fired, the people who did the hardest and most dangerous work, the people whose pay got shorted because we didn’t know the language and were afraid to complain.

When the immigrants of my parents’ and grandparents’ generation got to the mines and mills, the people already there said we were taking their jobs and ruining their country. Yet in the end, the immigrants of my parents’ and grandparents’ generation prevailed, and built

America. This is the history of my family, and this is the story of towns large and small across America, places like Seattle and St. Louis, San Antonio and Chicago and so many others.

And yet it doesn’t take long for us to forget the past and focus on anyone we think is different, and to bring back those familiar responses — that immigrants are taking our jobs, ruining our country.

When I hear that kind of talk, I ask: Did an immigrant move your plant overseas? Did an immigrant take away your pension? Or cut your health care? Did an immigrant undermine America’s workers’ right to organize? Or crash the financial system? Did immigrant workers write the trade laws that have sent

millions of jobs from our shores? Of course not.

In fact, as more immigrants gain the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, our chances of a future of shared prosperity increase. America’s economic strategy must bring us together, not drive us apart.

The reform President Obama proposed is a big step in the right direction, and it has the potential to lead us all in a better direction.

As president of the AFL-CIO, I’m proud to say that we open our arms to everybody who works — no matter where you’re from — and we demand commonsense policies that reflect

(Turn to Page 9)

## ...Grocery workers OK contracts in Oregon, SW Washington

(From Page 1)

year member of the union.

As was reported in the Feb. 15 edition of the Labor Press, employers agreed to merge the Portland area medical plan with the Joint Labor Management Retail Trust. JLMRT covers employees from Salem to the California border, in Central Oregon, in far Eastern Oregon, and in Southwest Washington.

Employers will increase funding for medical insurance by 14.87 percent; JLMRT members will see their Level 3 benefits improve, with deductibles reduced from \$500 to \$300 and annual out-of-pocket costs reduced from \$5,000 to \$3,000. After annual deductibles are met, the plan will pay 85 percent of the bill, a 10 percent increase from the previous contract.

Contract expiration dates also were altered so that Portland will lead off in the next round of bargaining starting in June 2015. The union wanted its largest group to be first out of the blocks because it provides more power at the bargaining table. In the past, the Portland unit bargained toward the end, after smaller contracts downstate had been completed. Additionally, the time span between when the first and last contracts expire was narrowed from 30 months to 16 months.

On the downside, workers will get a raise of 25 cents an hour over three years; it will take new hires more hours to reach journey-level status; and they won’t be paid time-and-a-half when working holidays.

Anderson said it was probably the best the bargaining committee was going to get, short of a strike.

Here is a list of the ratified contracts and their expiration dates:

Portland area, June 2015; Bend, July 2015; Newberg, September 2015; Vancouver area, December 2015; Burns, December 2015; Klamath Falls, December 2015 (includes Sherms; Longview/Cowlitz County, January 2016; Roseburg, January 2016 (includes Sherms); Medford, January 2016; Grants Pass, January 2016; Eugene, February 2016; Brookings, February 2016 (includes McKay’s Meat); The Dalles/Hood River, June 2016; McMinnville Meat, August 2016; Lincoln City/Newport, August 2016; Salem and Albany, August, 2016; Florence, October 2016; North Bend/Coos Bay, October 2016; and Tillamook/Astoria, November, 2016,

# When she has to work sick, you may get more than your coffee.

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# Top 10 users of H-1B guest worker program are offshore outsourcing firms

By RON HIRA

The H-1B 'non-immigrant' temporary foreign guest worker program is called a valuable tool for employers to attract and retain the "best and brightest" immigrants in the science, technology, engineering, and math fields. Because employers may petition for permanent residence for their H-1B employees, the visa is sometimes described as a "bridge to immigration" that will keep the smartest foreign STEM workers in the U.S. permanently and thus improve the nation's competitiveness.

In part, that's how senators Orin Hatch (R-Utah), Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), Chris Coons (R-DeI.), and Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), explain their new bill — known as the "I-Squared Act" — that would more than quadruple the size of the H-1B program (to 300,000).

[The U.S. currently makes 85,000 H-1B visas available annually, but more can be approved for operations with exemptions, such as universities and non-profit research organizations. In fiscal year 2012, for instance, 134,780 H-1B petition requests were approved.]

However, for the biggest users of the

program, this view is false: In 2012, the 10 employers receiving the largest number of H-1B visas were all in the business of outsourcing and offshoring high-tech American jobs. Many of the jobs that went to H-1B workers should have instead gone to U.S. workers, but employers are not required to recruit them before applying for an H-1B, and can even replace their U.S. workers with H-1Bs.

The top 10 H-1B employers were granted an astonishing 40,170 visas; nearly half the total annual quota. There are two reasons these firms hire H-1Bs instead of Americans: 1) an H-1B worker can legally be paid less than a U.S. worker in the same occupation and locality;

2) the H-1B worker learns the job and then rotates back to the home country and takes the work with him. That's why the H-1B was dubbed the "Outsourcing Visa" by the former Commerce Minister of India, Kamal Nath.

Rather than keeping jobs from leaving our shores, the H-1B does the opposite, by facilitating offshoring and providing employers with cheap, temporary labor — while reducing job opportunities for American high-tech workers in the process.

The I-Squared Act does nothing to protect against this, while vastly expanding the size of a deeply flawed program that accelerates the offshoring of American high-tech jobs and reduces America's future capacity to innovate.

## H-1B visa approvals

Company	2012	2011
Cognizant	9281	5095
Tata	7469	1659
Infosys	5600	3360
Wipro	4304	2803
Accenture	4037	1304
HCL America	2070	930
Mahindra Group (incl Satyam)	1963	404
IBM	1846	987
Larsen & Toubro	1832	1156
Deloitte	1668	798

**Employers with the most new H-1B visa application approvals in fiscal year 2012. Source: Computerworld analysis of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service data. Some company divisions were combined, such as IBM Corp. and IBM India, Tata consulting and engineering groups, etc.**

(Editor's Note: Ron Hira is a research associate for the Economic Policy Institute.)

## Fishing derby for Guide Dogs May 4

The third annual Salmon Fishing Derby will be held Saturday, May 4, on the docks at RiverPlace Marina, behind the RiverPlace Hotel in downtown Portland. The event, sponsored by Machinists District W24, is a fundraiser for Guide Dogs of America (GDA).

The International Association of Machinists founded GDA in 1948 in Sylmar, California, to train and provide guide dogs to the blind, free of charge. The organization receives no government funding. To breed, raise and train one guide dog costs \$38,000.

In two years, the Machinists District W24 derby has raised \$24,000.

Entry is \$200 per person, with a limit of four anglers per boat. Boats are staffed with professional fishing guides. This year a limited number of anglers can use their own boats. Registration is \$100 per angler.

Prizes are awarded for biggest fish and most fish landed. Following the derby there will be a luncheon and raffle.

The deadline to register is April 5.

Sponsorship space also is available, ranging from \$100 for a Bronze sponsor all the way to \$1,500 for a Diamond sponsor.

For more information or to register, go to [www.iamw24.org](http://www.iamw24.org) or email [communicator@iamw24.org](mailto:communicator@iamw24.org).

## ...Immigration reform links labor, U.S. Chamber

(From Page 1)

1. An independent commission to assess and manage future immigration, based on labor market shortages that are determined on the basis of actual need;
2. A secure and effective worker authorization mechanism;
3. Rational operational control of the border;
4. Adjustment of status for the current undocumented population; and
5. Improvement, not expansion, of temporary worker programs.

Bearing those principles in mind, labor leaders met with representatives of

the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in January and February to discuss how to fix immigration in a way that benefits both workers and employers, with a focus on less-skilled occupations. "American workers should have a first crack at available jobs," said U.S. Chamber of Commerce President Thomas Donohue and AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka in their Feb. 21 joint statement. But in instances when employers are not able to fill job openings with American workers, they said, businesses should be able to hire foreign workers while fully protecting the wages and working conditions of U.S. and immigrant workers.

"Among other things, this requires a new kind of worker visa program that does not keep all workers in a permanent temporary status, provides labor mobility in a way that still gives American workers a first shot at available

jobs, and that automatically adjusts as the American economy expands and contracts," the joint statement said.

On Feb. 19, the Oregon AFL-CIO held a press conference outside the U.S. immigration office in Northwest Portland. As a show of unity, Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain stood alongside Francisco Lopez of the immigrant rights group CAUSA, Brenda Mendoza of the farmworker advocacy group PCUN, and Hugo Nicolas, an undocumented immigrant from Mexico who was brought by his parents to the United States at age 11. Chamberlain said the Oregon labor movement has spent the last 18 months building relationships with immigrants rights organizations.

"Immigration reform is a family issue, it's a workers issue, and it's an American issue," Chamberlain said. "We are not a nation that treats people as second class citizens. We're not a nation that allows an immigration policy that allows for the exploitation of workers. That's not what this country's about."

On March 5, the Oregon AFL-CIO Executive Board will consider a resolution calling on Congress to pass "common-sense immigration reform" reflecting the AFL-CIO and Change to Win federation joint principles, and committing the Oregon AFL-CIO to communicate that position to Oregon's congressional delegation.



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# Official Notices

## BAKERY, CONFECTIONERY, TOBACCO WORKERS AND GRAIN MILLERS 114

Executive Board meets 9 a.m. Tuesday, March 26, at 7931 NE Halsey, Suite 205, Portland.

## BOILERMAKERS 500

Members meet 10 a.m. Saturday, March 9, at 2515 NE Columbia Blvd., Portland.

## BRICKLAYERS AND ALLIED CRAFTWORKERS 1

Members meet 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 19, at 12812 NE Marx St., Portland.

## CEMENT MASONS 555

Members meet 7 p.m. Thursday, March 21, at 12812 NE Marx St., Portland.

## CENTRAL OREGON LABOR COUNCIL

Delegates meet 5:30 p.m. Monday, March 25, at the Social Justice Center, 155 NE Irving Ave., Bend.

## COLUMBIA-PACIFIC BUILDING TRADES

Delegates meet 10 a.m. Tuesdays, March 5 and March 12, at Kirkland Union Manor II, 3535 SE 86th, Portland.

## ELECTRICAL WORKERS 48

Member to Member and Member to Future Member Training, Saturday, March 2, at IBEW Local 48. Contact Kristi Straight to register at 503.889.3660 or Kristi@IBEW48.com.

Your Business Manager Meeting, Saturday, March 2, in the Meeting Hall. Call Nancy Reames at 503.251.9681 for an appointment.

Executive Board meets 6:30 p.m. Wednesdays, March 6 and 20, in the Executive Boardroom.

Coast Unit meets 7 p.m. Thursday, March 7, at Astoria Labor Temple, 926 Duane St., Astoria.

Electrical Workers Minority Caucus meets 5 p.m. Tuesday, March 12, in the Executive Boardroom.

Residential Unit meets 6 p.m. Tuesday, March 12, in the Dispatch Lobby.

Wasco Unit meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, March 13, at Northern Wasco County PUD, 2345 River Road, The Dalles.

Sound and Communication Unit meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, March 13, in the Meeting Hall.

Washington Unit meet 5:30 p.m. Thursday, March 14, at IBEW Local 48 Longview office building, 1145 Commerce Ave., Longview, WA.

Women of 48 meets 5 p.m. Friday, March 15, at Radio Room, 1101 NE Alberta, Portland.

Bylaws Committee meets 5:30 p.m. Monday, March 18, 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 March, No. 2344, Timothy J. Mitchell; No. 2345, Steven L. Wheeler; and No. 2346, Russell A. Brannan. The March assessment is \$1.50.

## ELEVATOR CONSTRUCTORS 23

Members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, March 14, preceded by a 5:30 p.m. Executive Board meeting, at 12779 NE Whitaker Way, Portland.

## FIRE FIGHTERS 452

Members meet 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 6, at 2807 NW Fruit Valley Rd., Vancouver, Wash.

## FIRE FIGHTERS 1660

Members meet 8 a.m. Thursday, March 14, at 4411 SW Sunset Dr., Lake Oswego.

## GLASS WORKERS 740

Executive Board members meet 5 p.m. Thursday, March 7, at 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

Portland area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, March 7, at 11145 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland. **PLEASE NOTE SPECIAL CALL VOTE.**

Eugene area members meet 5 p.m. Monday, March 4, at Best Western Grand Manor Inn, 971 Kruse Way, Springfield. **PLEASE NOTE SPECIAL CALL VOTE.**

Salem area members meet 5 p.m. Tuesday, March 5, at Candalaria Terrace, 2659 Commercial St. SE, Salem. **PLEASE NOTE SPECIAL CALL VOTE.**

## INSULATORS 36

Executive Board meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, March 13. Members meet 7 p.m. Friday, March 15. Meetings are at 11145 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

## IRON WORKERS 29

Members meet 7 p.m. Thursday, March 7, preceded by a 5:30 p.m. Executive Board meeting, at 11620 NE Ainsworth Cir., #200, Portland.

## IRON WORKERS SHOPMEN 516

Executive Board meets 6 p.m. Thursday, March 14. Members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, March 28. Meetings are at 11620 NE Ainsworth Cir., #300.

## LABORERS 320

Members meet 7 p.m. Thursday, March 14, at Joe Edgar Hall, Teamsters' Complex, 1850 NE 162nd Ave.

## LABORERS 483

Members meet 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 19, at the Musicians Hall, 325 NE 20th Ave., Portland.

## LABORERS/VANCOUVER 335

Members meet 7 p.m. Monday, March 4, preceded by a 6:15 p.m. Executive Board meeting, at the Vancouver Labor Center, 2212 NE Andresen Rd., Vanc., Wash.

## LANE COUNTY LABOR COUNCIL

Delegates meet 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 27, at 1116 South A St., Springfield.

## LANE, COOS, CURRY & DOUGLAS BUILDING TRADES

Delegates meet at noon Wednesday, March 27, at the Springfield Training Center, 2861 Pierce Parkway, Springfield.

## LINN-BENTON-LINCOLN LABOR COUNCIL

Delegates meet 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 6, preceded by a 6:30 p.m. Executive Board meeting, at 1400 Salem Ave., Albany.

## LINOLEUM LAYERS 1236

Executive Board meets 5 p.m. Monday, March 4. Portland area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, March 28.

Meeting are at 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

## MARION-POLK-YAMHILL LABOR COUNCIL

Executive Board meets 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 12, followed by a 7 p.m. general meeting at 2110 State St. Salem.

## METAL TRADES COUNCIL

Executive Board meets 10 a.m. Thursday, March 14. Delegates meet 5 p.m. Tuesday, March 26.

Meetings are held at IBEW Local 48 Hall, 15937 NE Airport Way, Portland.

## MID-COLUMBIA LABOR COUNCIL

Delegates meet 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 12, at 3313 W. 2nd, The Dalles.

## MOLDERS 139B

Members meet 6:30 p.m. Thursday, March 21, preceded by a 6 p.m. Executive Board meeting at the Carpenters Hall, 2205 N. Lombard, Portland.

## NORTHWEST OREGON LABOR COUNCIL

Delegates meet 7 p.m. Monday, March 25, at IBEW #48 Hall, 15937 NE Airport Way, Portland.

## OFFICE & PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES LOCAL 11

Members meet 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 12, at 3815 Columbia St., Vancouver. **PLEASE NOTE:** Nominations for open offices will be held at this meeting.

Nominations to be accepted for the following positions: Vice President (2 year term); Recording Secretary (2 year term); Sargent at Arms (2 year term); Utilities (2 year term); Public Employees (2 year term); At-Large (1 year term); At-Large (2 year term) two positions available; Trustee (3 year term).

Nominees must be present to accept, or have written acceptance of nomination submitted at this meeting.

Nominations will be held in accordance with Article VII, Sections 1-4 of the Constitution of the Office & Professional Employees International Union, Local No. 11 which states the following:

### NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

Section 1. Nomination of officers shall take place on the second Tuesday in March at the General Membership meeting of each year. No person may be nominated, appointed or elected, or in any way represent the members of this Union unless he or she has been a member of this Union in continuous good standing for at least twelve (12) months preceding the election.

Section 2. No member shall be a candidate for more than one (1) office.

Section 3. Members need not be present to be nominated for any union office. Those members, who by virtue of geography are unable to either attend or have other members from their area attend to place their name in nomination, may notify the Union office of their desire to be nominated. The Executive Secretary Treasurer shall nominate or cause to be nominated those same members. The members, who are not present at the nomination meeting to accept the nomination, must have their acceptance of the nomination in writing, available at the nomination meeting. Only those candidates who accept the nomination shall be considered valid candidates.

Section 4. Except as provided for in Section 3 above, write-in nominations or nominations by proxy shall not be allowed.

## OPERATING ENGINEERS 701

**PLEASE NOTE:** Nominations for election of officers will be held at the following meetings.

District 3 members meet 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 2, at North Bend/Coos Bay Labor Center, 3427 Ash St., North Bend.

District 3 members meet 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, April

3, at Holiday Inn Express, 285 Peninger Rd., Central Point.

District 2 members meet 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 4, at the Comfort Suites, 969 Kruse Way, Springfield.

District 1 & 5 members meet 8 p.m. Friday, April 5, at 555 E. First St., Gladstone.

District 4 members meet 7:30 p.m. Monday, April 8, at Cousin's Restaurant, 2114 W. 6th St., The Dalles.

District 4 members meet 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, April 9, at the Hermiston DTC Office, 148 Main St., Hermiston.

## PAINTERS & DRYWALL FINISHERS 10

Members meet 6 p.m. Wednesday, March 20, at the Asbestos Hall, 11145 NE Sandy Blvd. 2nd Floor, Portland. Website: www.iupatlocal10.org.

## PLASTERERS 82

Members meet 5 p.m. Wednesday, March 6, at 12812 NE Marx St., Portland.

## PORTLAND CITY & METROPOLITAN EMPLOYEES 189

Executive Board meets 6:15 p.m. Tuesday, March 12. General membership meets 6:15 p.m. Tuesday, March 26.

Meetings are held at 6025 E. Burnside St.

## ROOFERS & WATERPROOFERS 49

Executive Board meets 7 p.m. Thursday, March 7. Members meet 7 p.m. Thursday, March 14.

Meetings are at 5032 SE 26th Ave, Portland. (Phone: 503 232-4807)

## SALEM BCTC

Delegates meet 10 a.m. Thursday, March 7, at the IBEW 280 Training Center, 33309 Hwy 99E, Tangent.

## SHEET METAL WORKERS 16

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

Portland members meet 6 p.m. Tuesday, March 12, at the Sheet Metal Training Center, 2379 NE 178th Ave., Portland.

Medford area members meet 4 p.m. Wednesday, March 13, at Wild River Pizza, 2684 N. Pacific Hwy., Medford.

Eugene area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, March 14, at Sheet Metal Local 16 Hall, 1887 Laura St., Springfield.

Coos Bay area members meet 4 p.m. Thursday, March 21, at Abby's Pizza, 997 First St., Coos Bay.

Women of Sheet Metal Workers Local 16 (WOSM) meet 4:30 p.m. Friday, March 15, at Beulahland, 118 NE 28th Ave., Portland. Children are welcome.

## SIGN PAINTERS & PAINT MAKERS 1094

Members meet 3:30 p.m. Monday, March 18, in the District Office, at 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

## SOUTHERN OREGON

**CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL**  
Delegates meet 6 p.m. Tuesday, March 12, at the Labor Temple, 4480 Rogue Valley Hwy. #3, Central Point.

**SOUTHWESTERN OREGON CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL**  
Delegates meet 6 p.m. Monday, March 4, at the Bay Area Labor Center, 3427 Ash, North Bend.

## SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON LABOR COUNCIL

Delegates meet 6 p.m. Thursday, March 28, preceded by an Executive Board meeting, at the ILWU Local 4 Hall, 1205 Ingalls St., Vancouver, Wash.

## UNITED ASSOCIATION 290

Portland area members meet 7:30 p.m. Friday, March 15, at 20210 SW Teton Ave., Tualatin.

Astoria area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, March 21, at the Astoria Labor Temple, 926 Duane St., Astoria.

Bend area members meet 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 19, at the Local 290 Training Center, 2161 SW First, Redmond.

Brookings area members meet 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 19, at Curry County Search and Rescue, 517 Railroad St., Brookings.

Coos Bay area members meet 6 p.m. Tuesday, March 19, at the Coos Bay Training Center, 2nd & Kruse, Coos Bay.

Eugene area members meet 6:30 p.m. Monday, March 18, at the Springfield Training Center, 2861 Pierce Parkway, Springfield.

Klamath Falls area members meet 5 p.m. Tuesday, March 19, at 4816 S. 6th St., Klamath Falls.

Medford area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, March 21, at 950 Industrial Circle, White City.

Salem area members meet 6 p.m. Monday, March 18, at 1810 Hawthorne Ave. NE, Salem.

The Dalles area members meet 6 p.m. Tuesday, March 19, at the United Steelworkers Local 9170 Union Hall, The Dalles.

Humboldt-DeI Norte Co. area members meet 6 p.m. Tuesday, March 19, at the Eureka Training Center, 634 California St., Eureka, CA.

## UNITED STEELWORKERS 1097

Members meet 6:45 p.m. Wednesday, March 6, preceded by a 5:45 p.m. Executive Board meeting, in the union office building, Westport.

## Poker tournament for Doernbecher slated March 16

The second annual Texas Hold'em tournament for Doernbecher Children's Hospital is slated for Saturday, March 16, at the Sheet Metal Workers Local 16 hall in Northeast Portland.

The event is sponsored by Unions for Kids, which also holds the annual motorcycle poker run.

Buy-in to the card game is \$50. Top winners will receive Visa gift cards. The amount of each card will be determined by the number of card players, but minimums have been set at \$1,000 for first place, \$500 for second place, and \$250 for third place.

Drawings for a flat screen television and other items also will take place at the poker tournament.

For more information or to register, contact Emmy Kever at 503-254-0123 or e-mail her at [ekeever@sheet-metal-16.org](mailto:ekeever@sheet-metal-16.org).

## CORRECTION

In the Feb. 15 issue, an article about upcoming bargaining with the City of Portland incorrectly identified a union that is part of the city union coalition known as the District Council of Trade Unions (DCTU). The DCTU includes Painters Local 10, not Painters District Council 5 as reported.

# Retiree Meeting Notices

### ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED

#### AMERICANS OREGON CHAPTER

Annual State Convention, 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Saturday, March 9, at Madison's Grill Banquet Room. All retirees are welcome to attend.

### ELECTRICAL WORKERS 48

Retirees, wives and friends meet 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, March 12, at Tebo's Restaurant, 19120 SE McLoughlin Blvd., Gladstone. For more info, please call Glenn Hodgkinson at 503 656-0028.

### ELEVATOR CONSTRUCTORS 23

Retirees meet 11:30 a.m. Wednesday, March 6, at Denny's Restaurant, 12101 SE 82nd, Happy Valley.

### INSULATORS 36

Retirees meet 9 a.m. Thursday, March 7, at the Dockside Restaurant,

2047 NW Front Ave., Portland.

### IRON WORKERS 29

Retirees meet 12 noon Wednesday, March 13, at the Union Hall meeting room, 11620 NE Ainsworth Circle #200, Portland for a catered lunch.

### NORTHWEST OREGON LABOR RETIREES COUNCIL

Business meeting from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. Monday, March 11, in the Labors' Community Service conference room, 1125 SE Madison #103B, Portland.

### OREGON AFSCME

Retirees meet 10 a.m. Tuesday, March 19, at the AFSCME office, at the AFSCME office, 6025 E Burnside, Portland. Call Michael Arken for information at 1-800-521-5954 ext. 226.

### SHEET METAL WORKERS 16

Retirees meet 11:30 a.m. Thursday, March 14, at Fung Lung, 2025 N Lombard, Portland.

### TRANSIT 757

Retirees meet 9:30 a.m. Wednesday, March 6, at Westmoreland Union Manor, 6404 SE 23rd, Portland.

### UA 290

Rusty Pipe retirees meet 2 p.m. Thursday, March 7, at the Springfield Training Center, 2861 Pierce Parkway, Springfield.

Salem area retirees meet 12 noon Wednesday, March 13, at Almost Home Restaurant, 3310 Market St. SE, Salem.

Portland area retirees meet 10 a.m. Thursday, March 21, at 20210 SW Teton Ave., Tualatin.



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# Union-label green jobs — in your attic — for no money down

In terms of “bang for the buck,” the most important green jobs of the future look a lot like the low-tech home insulation jobs of the past. That’s because dollar-for-dollar, home insulation is the cheapest way to reduce energy use and combat climate change.

But the jobs don’t have to be low-wage too. In a state-sponsored program now entering its third year, workers earn

a living wage insulating attics and walls, and Portland-area homeowners even have the option to choose union-signatory contractors.

The program, Clean Energy Works Oregon, uses in-program financing and rebates of up to \$1,500 to eliminate upfront costs for homeowners. Homeowners who take out loans through the program have the option of paying them back on their utility bills.

And two contractors participating in the program — Abacus Energy Solutions and Faison Energy Solutions — are signatory contractors employing members of Laborers Local 296.

“It’s not rocket science, insulating a

home, so people tend to get paid a lower rate,” said Abacus owner Jim Plantico. But thanks to a Clean Energy Works Oregon requirement that participating contractors pay at least 180 percent of Oregon’s minimum wage, workers earn at least \$16.11 an hour. As a union-signatory contractor, Plantico said, Abacus pays 3 percent over that to cover union dues, and offers a better set of health benefits through the union health trust, plus paid holidays and vacation.

Plantico said Abacus also uses union subcontractors on furnace and duct work, such as Milwaukie Heating and Cooling, an HVAC contractor signatory with Sheet Metal Workers Local 16.

Homeowners can plug into the program and get a union-signatory energy audit at [weatherizeforgood.org](http://weatherizeforgood.org) or by calling 503-893-9240.



Rochelle Sadler, a member of Laborers Local 296, blows insulation in the attic of a 1986 home in Portland’s St. Johns neighborhood. She is one of 10 full-time employees at Abacus Energy Solutions. The homeowners — Oregon AFSCME lobbyist Eva Rippetateau and her husband, AFSCME international field coordinator Andy Chavira — chose Abacus because it’s a union shop. Chavira said \$4,500 of blown fiberglass attic insulation, air sealing, and HVAC improvements will cut their energy bill — and make a couple of chilly rooms more comfortable.



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## Hearing on paid sick leave pushed back to March 7

A second public hearing on a proposed sick leave ordinance by the Portland City Council has been pushed back to March 7. Initially, earned sick leave was supposed to come up for a second hearing Feb. 27 and then up for a final vote in early March. Instead, the second hearing on a revised version of the ordinance will be held Thursday, March 7, at 3 p.m.

A final vote will follow on a later date.

## ... SPEEA split decision in Boeing

(From Page 1)

ber 2011. During that time the union has filed three unfair labor practice (ULP) charges against Boeing. The most recent was Feb. 13, after company security, acting on management orders, banned engineers and technical workers from leafletting at the Everett factory. The actions are in addition to reports of managers holding mandatory

meetings with employees to interrogate and intimidate them regarding the contract votes. The other ULPs relate to Boeing taking surveillance photographs of employees marching last year inside and outside the factory, and for seizing employee cameras and photographs of union marches.

All of the charges are pending before the National Labor Relations Board.

Meantime, SPEEA and Boeing met Feb. 27 (after this issue went to press) under the auspices of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to “explore settlement options.”

Boeing has said its previous proposal was the company’s “best and final offer.”

“There are pathways to a negotiated agreement available,” Goforth said prior to the talks. “With this second re-

jection by technical workers of Boeing takeaways, it’s time for the company to stop wasting resources and improve its offer to reflect the value and contributions technical workers bring to Boeing. That way, we can avoid a strike and focus on fixing the problems of the 787 and restoring customer confidence in Boeing.”

Boeing tried to build its Dreamliner 787 passenger jet on the cheap by outsourcing much of the work. After experiencing yearslong delays, the Dreamliner is currently grounded because of problems with the plane’s lithium-ion batteries.

Boeing currently is enjoying record profits, a completely funded pension plan, 4,200 airplanes on backorder, and \$20 billion cash on hand, the union said.

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# Painter/taper apprentices graduate

## Apprenticeship instructor Marti Fagin retires

The 2012 class of new journeymen painters and tapers was recognized Feb. 21 at a dinner and ceremony. Graduates from the three-year Painter/Decorator and Drywall Finisher Apprenticeship Program received plaques, Carhartt jackets, and a bucket of Purdy paint brushes and other tools.

Special recognition also was given to apprenticeship instructor Marti Fagin, a longtime member of Painters and Drywall Finishers Local 10, who retired after serving a decade as an instructor. She has worked in the field since 1977. Fagin is pictured to the right receiving a Carhartt jacket from Bud Bartunek, area director of Painters and Allied Trades District Council 5, and contractor Steve Schiller of Schiller and Vroman Painting.

New journeymen and women (pictured right) are: Seated from left to right: Michael Worden, Claudia Gallardo, Everardo Sanchez, and Lee Gale. Worden and Gale are drywall finishers. Not in attendance were painters Raquel Avalos, Matthew Farr and Danielle Ferris, and drywall finisher Miguel Lopez. Standing in the back row are union officials and contractors of the Signatory Painting Contractors Organization.

The new journeymen and women are members of Portland-based Local 10, Salem-based Local 724, and Eugene-based Local 1277.



## '34 truckers strike comes to the stage

The Minneapolis Teamster Strike of 1934 will come to life March 8 to 23 at Portland's Sowelu Theater Ensemble.

The play "Hard Times Come Again No More," by Martha Boesing, is based on the 1930s writing of Meridel

LeSueur. The strike, one of the most iconic in American history, shut down trucking in Minneapolis and brought industrial unionism to the region.

The show takes place at Performance Works NW, 4625 SE 67th Ave. (SE 67th and Foster). Performances are 7:30 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, as well as 2 p.m. matinees March 16, 17, and 23.

Following the March 15 performance, a discussion about the context of the strike will be led by Portland State University sociologist Ben Cushing and Brooke Jacobson, president of the PSU Faculty Association/American Federation of Teachers Local 3571.

Tickets are \$12 to \$25, sliding scale. Call 503-568-4017 to reserve tickets or visit [sowelutheater.org](http://sowelutheater.org).

## ...Trumka

(From Page 4)

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Robert Jennings, Labor Trustee, Pipe Trades District Council 36

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# Obama nominates Block, Griffin to regular NLRB seats

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) — President Barack Obama has nominated Sharon Block and Richard Griffin Jr. to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), setting up yet another confrontation with Senate Republicans over the Board, its powers, decisions, and future.

Griffin, a former general counsel for the Operating Engineers, and Block, a former top aide to the late Massachusetts senator Edward M. Kennedy, have been serving on the Board since January 2012. They were appointed by the president during a congressional break, after Republicans blocked their confirmations.

The five-member NLRB oversees enforcement of the laws governing union organizing drives, strikes, and contract negotiations in the private sector. Republicans have been trying to hamstring the agency for years — but with much more fervor since the Board charged The Boeing Company with illegally retaliating against Machinists District 751 in Washington after it decided to build a multi-million aircraft assembly plant in right-to-work South Carolina. The union complaint was withdrawn in December 2011 after the Machinists reached agreement on a new contract.

However, attempts to dismantle the NLRB have continued.

Republican senators have filibustered every nominee put forth by the president. That's because without a quorum the agency can't operate. [In 2010, the U.S. Supreme Court concluded in a 5-4 decision that the Board was not authorized to make rulings with less than three members.]

The NLRB lost its quorum early in January 2012, when the term of Craig Becker — also a recess appointee — expired. Becker was general counsel to

both the AFL-CIO and Service Employees International Union.

With Congress in a break, Obama named Block, Griffin, and Terry Flynn to the Board. Block and Griffin are Democrats. Flynn is a Republican. The Board was whittled to three members in May 2012 when Flynn resigned. Flynn quit after the NLRB's inspector general found that he had leaked inside information to outside sources — some of it to former Board member Peter Schaumber, a labor adviser to Mitt Romney's presidential campaign.

Then, in January 2013, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit ruled that the NLRB was operating without a quorum. The court ruled that the Senate technically wasn't in recess when Obama made the appointments. [The Senate had been meeting in 1-minute-or-less sessions, every three days — a Republican strategy to prevent the president from making any "recess" appointments]. It ruled that Obama's appointments were not constitutional, the NLRB didn't have a quorum and, thus, it could not decide on cases.

The case on appeal before the D.C. Circuit arose from an unfair labor practice charge brought against Washington soft drink distributor Noel Canning by the Teamsters Union. The NLRB had ruled in favor of the union.

The Hill newspaper called the D.C. Circuit ruling an "extraordinary decision" that, if upheld, will nullify decades of NLRB appointments. The Hill reported that President Carter made the first recess appointment in 1980, when Republicans filibustered his nom-

ination. Since then, five presidents have made 26 NLRB recess appointments. Only three of these appointments — one by Bush I, two by Clinton — would be valid under the (D.C. Court) ruling. George W. Bush made the most NLRB recess appointments, seven, none of which were constitutional, according to the D.C. Circuit.

The Obama Administration disagrees with the ruling and is expected to appeal the decision.

Meanwhile, the Chamber of Commerce is advising employers to appeal unfavorable decisions from the past

year to the D.C. Circuit "as quickly as possible" because other Federal Courts might uphold the recess appointments.

In the U.S. Senate, Labor Committee Chairman Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) supported the nominations of Block and Griffin. He also urged Obama to nominate Democrat Mark Gaston Pearce to a new term as the Board's chair, and to quickly nominate two Republicans to vacant minority-party seats so his committee can move all the names at once.

Pearce has said the NLRB plans to move forward with business as usual despite the court ruling.

## Harley tickets now on sale; Unions for Kids Poker Run is June 8

Mark your calendars for Saturday, June 8, for the 11th annual Unions for Kids Motorcycle Poker Run & Chili Cook-Off, a benefit for Doernbecher Children's Hospital.

In 10 years, the event has donated \$326,000 to the kids of Doernbecher.

In addition to the motorcycle run, there is a raffle to win a Harley Davidson motorcycle autographed by the Zac Brown Band. This year's bike is a 2013 candy orange/beer bottle Heritage Soft-tail Classic valued at over \$21,000.

Raffle tickets are currently on sale for \$10 each, with only 5,000 sold.

A silent auction the day of the event will feature a guitar autographed by rapper Snoop Dog aka, Snoop Lion.

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# Employer pulls ergonomic chairs out from under workers

By **DON McINTOSH**  
Associate Editor

This is a story about chairs. It's also about an employer policy that goes beyond ignorance or indifference into deliberate cruelty and contempt.

The employer is the Boston-headquartered nonprofit Fund for the Public Interest — the fundraising wing of the U.S. PIRG network and its spun-off state environmental groups. Fund for the Public Interest employs tens of thousands of canvassers all over the country who knock on doors or accost pedestrians, signing up members for state groups like CALPIRG and Environment Colorado. Once people sign up, they get calls asking them to renew and make additional contributions. The calls are made by “phone canvassers” at three call centers run by the Fund.

In October 2011, phone canvassers at the Fund's Portland call center voted to unionize with Communications Workers of America (CWA) Local 7901. Eleven months later, the Fund relocated its Portland call center to the windowless basement of a 1928 office building at 516 SE Morrison. The move isolated the unionized telephone fundraisers from their nonunion coworkers in the Fund's door-to-door and street canvass operation, as well as from OSPIRG and Environment Oregon pro-

gram staff. The call center workers have been in that basement ever since. Never mind the cramped conditions, ancient computers, the fold-up tables that serve as desks, or the black- and coral-colored mold that the union is investigating. It's the chairs that best encapsulate how the Fund treats its workers.

When they arrived at the new location, the phone canvassers learned that the Fund had replaced most of their adjustable “ergonomic” chairs with stackable metal-frame conference chairs. Managers announced a new policy: Only workers who presented a doctor's note would be allowed to sit in ergonomic chairs, even if they wanted to purchase and bring in their own. But most of the Fund's phone canvassers don't have access to a doctor, because they don't have health insurance: It takes a year to get the Fund's employer-sponsored health coverage, and even then, the employee share of the cost prevents most from enrolling in it. So, a handful of ergonomic chairs sit unused off to the side of the office, while workers sit from 12:50 to 9:20 p.m., up to six days a week, on chairs that are entirely inappropriate for a desk job. The call center managers, meanwhile, sit in ergonomic chairs.

“My back is definitely hurting a lot,” said Fund caller John Ingram, 30. “I

don't know if it's because of the chairs or not, but when I sit in a regular chair it feels much better.”

Michael Wood, administrator at Oregon OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration), says he's heard of office employers who refuse to fork over money for good chairs, but he's never heard of an employer who had good chairs and then took them away.

“Switching people out of a ‘task chair’ into a stackable chair increases the risk that there will be a [workers' compensation] claim or that there will be a legitimate injurious condition over time,” Wood told the Labor Press. “And I would add, it's a mistake to wait until the injurious condition occurs before you provide a chair that could minimize it.”

The labor movement has campaigned for two decades to get federal OSHA to impose an enforceable ergonomic standard — a requirement that employers take steps to prevent musculoskeletal disorders like carpal tunnel and tendinitis that result from repetitive motion and uncomfortable postures in poorly designed workspaces. OSHA had that authority under the 1970 law that created it, but Congress intervened in 2001 and specifically barred OSHA from issuing an ergonomic standard.

And yet, many employers have



After workers unionized at a call center that raises funds for the PIRG network, management got rid of adjustable ergonomic chairs (right), and replaced them with metal-frame stackable chairs (above).



made ergonomic improvements anyway. Adjusting the workspace to the human being who works in it is the hallmark of a humane workplace. It also improves productivity and morale, and reduces workers' compensation costs. Though OSHA is barred from requiring it, the agency does offer extensive free information about ergonomics, including recommendations about office work stations. Office environments are much safer than factories, warehouses, and construction sites, but there's still much an office employer can do to prevent workers from developing chronic back pain and other conditions.

According to OSHA, a good chair is one that supports the back, legs, buttocks, and arms, while reducing exposure to awkward postures and contact stress. At a minimum, it should have a backrest that conforms to the natural curvature of the spine and provides adequate lumbar support. And it should have a comfortable seat, positioned so that the feet can rest flat on the floor or footrest. Since people come in different sizes, chairs should have seats and backs that are adjustable.

The stackable chairs at Fund for the Public Interest's Portland call center are none of those things. Workers protested to management right away when the new chairs were introduced, but were told the chairs were fine. At a union contract negotiation session, the union bargaining team gave Fund call center director Pat Wood a copy of the OSHA pamphlet on ergonomics. But the Fund refused to change its policy.

“They finally responded to us,” recalls CWA Local 7901 President Madelyn Elder. “[They said] ‘We think that these chairs are perfectly adequate, and we don't understand what's wrong with them; there's no law against them, so we're not going to change them.’”

Call centers in general have developed a reputation as high-tech sweatshops — low-wage high-turnover workplaces where every key stroke is

monitored, every bathroom break timed, every call subject to management surveillance. And yet, says Elder, adjustable chairs are standard even in the most abusive nonunion call centers.

The Labor Press visited the Fund call center, took pictures, and asked floor manager Kate Fielding (found sitting in an ergonomic chair) to explain the Fund's chair policy. Fielding wouldn't answer questions, but took down contact information and promised to relay it to someone who could. No one ever called back. And the Fund's designated spokesperson, Caitlyn Seeley, once again failed to return a call from the Labor Press.

Why does the Fund, a progressive, “cause-oriented” employer, have such a policy? Workers think it's an effort to grind down, demoralize, and wear out the one workplace that had the nerve to unionize.

“This is sadistic,” says former Fund caller David Neel, who was fired in November. “It's really just designed to drive people out of the job.”

Since the union campaign began 16 months ago, the Fund has fired at least nine pro-union workers, including all six workers who volunteered on the union bargaining team when contract negotiations started. That's in a workplace with about 25 workers. And 15 months of monthly negotiation sessions have produced no union contract thus far: The Fund has insisted that the call center remain an “at-will” workplace and a “open shop” employer in which union dues are optional.

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Members of Laborers Local 320 stage a successful one-day strike Feb. 12 at the CertainTeed asphalt roof shingle factory in Portland.

## Laborers Local 320 settles contract at CertainTeed after one-day strike

### Shinglemaker improves offer after walkout

Building material manufacturer CertainTeed reached agreement on a new union contract at its Portland asphalt roof shingle factory — after a one-day strike by 45 members of Laborers Local 320.

Before the Feb. 12 strike, the company, a subsidiary of French multinational Saint-Gobain, was insisting that workers drop the union-affiliated health insurance trust and instead enroll in a company-sponsored self-insured plan. The union plan has a \$200 annual deductible, while the company plan carries a \$2,500 deductible; even after a proposed \$800 annual contribution to an employee health savings account, that would have made health care much less affordable. Wages at the factory range from about \$16 an hour for new hires to as high as \$33.40 for experienced mechanics, and the average is about \$21 an hour.

Also, eight years ago, explains Local 320 Business Manager Dave Tischer, CertainTeed ended contributions to the traditional defined benefit pension plan, and asked employees to enroll in its 401(k) plan instead, with an under-

standing that the company would later match employee contributions. But in bargaining this year, company negotiators balked at offering the match.

When the previous three-year contract expired, the union gave 10-day strike notice, and the company reacted: It began to ship product out to a Seattle warehouse in preparation for a strike. The strike halted that.

Workers walked out at 10 a.m., and maintained pickets outside the factory at 6350 NW Front Ave. Tischer said participation was 100 percent. Pickets drew honks of support from passersby on busy Front Avenue, and at 5:20 p.m., labor and management shook hands on a new company offer, with even better terms than the union's proposal had contained before the strike. Ratification was unanimous.

Wages will increase 7.5 percent over the course of the new five-year contract. The company will match workers' 401(k) contributions up to 4 percent of salary. And they get to keep the union-affiliated health plan.

# Merkley, Wyden challenge plan to end Saturday mail delivery

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Oregon's U.S. Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden joined 22 other senators in challenging the postmaster general's authority to discontinue Saturday mail delivery later this year without congressional approval.

In a letter to Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe, the senators acknowledge the financial challenges the Postal Service is facing and urged him to work with Congress to address the problems through bipartisan reform, such as the Senate legislation passed last year.

They also pointed out that a shift to five-day service could lead to further declines in mail volume and revenues, worsening the U.S. Postal Service's overall condition.

Merkley and Wyden were joined by Senators Tom Udall, Tom Harkin, Al Franken, Carl Levin, Debbie Stabenow, Mark Begich, Martin Heinrich, Jon Tester, Sherrod Brown, Max Baucus, Bernie Sanders, Jeanne Shaheen, Mazie Hirono, Joe Manchin, Jack Reed, Amy Klobuchar, Elizabeth Warren, Sheldon Whitehouse, Michael Bennet, Mark Udall, Brian Schatz and Heidi Heitkamp in the letter to the postmaster.

They noted that recently the Postal Service itself has recognized it lacks the power to terminate six-day service.

"As recently as last year, the Postal Service did not believe it had the authority to end six-day delivery without legislative action by Congress. For example, in the USPS's 'Plan for Profitability,' re-

leased on February 6, 2012, savings for five-day delivery were categorized under the heading of 'legislative initiatives,'" they wrote.

"Furthermore, you personally delivered testimony before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on September 6, 2011 where you noted that 'Congress must act ... [to] allow the Postal Service the authority to determine delivery frequency.'"

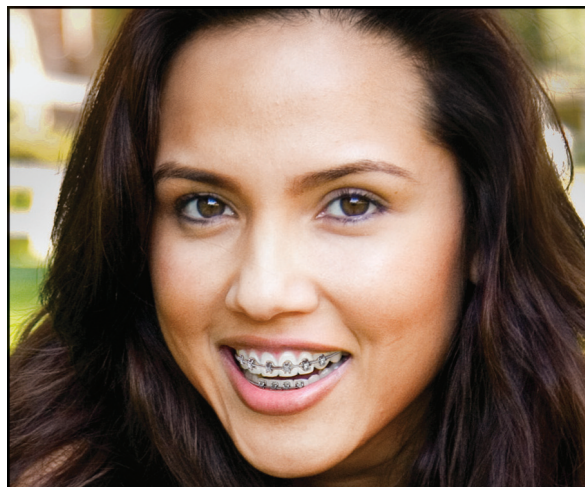
They also pointed out the move is a violation of existing law under the Continuing Appropriations Resolution of 2012. "[W]e believe your proposal does not comply with the existing statutory requirement to continue six-day delivery and rural delivery mail services at no less than the 1983 levels."

Such a move would impact 70,000 jobs and negatively affect the rural communities they represent.

"With the national unemployment rate at 7.8 percent, moving to five-day delivery will hurt middle class families," they said.

## Save Our Postal Service rally March 17 in Portland

A Save Our Postal Service national day of action will take place on St. Patrick's Day, Sunday, March 17 — the anniversary of the great postal strike of 1970. In Portland, supporters will gather at Pioneer Square starting at 2 p.m. For more information, go to [www.savethepostoffice.com](http://www.savethepostoffice.com).



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