



NORTHWEST

LABOR
PRESSVolume 109
Number 3
February 1, 2008
PortlandSEIU's Andy Stern attends protest rally

Portland Public Schools sticks to draconian offers

The honeymoon is over. Unions at Portland Public Schools (PPS) had high hopes last October that a new superintendent, Carole Smith, might steer the district away from years of harsh labor relations stances toward the least-paid workers.

By now it's clear that hasn't happened.

In drawn-out bargaining with three separate unions, the district hasn't shifted much from the proposals it had before Smith was appointed: for some, savage wage cuts of up to one quarter; for others, wage increases that will account for just half the rate of inflation. And district labor negotiators are insisting that union employees pay the same monthly cost as much higher-paid non-represented administrators. In other words, \$11-an-hour cafeteria workers, \$14-an-hour custodians, \$15-an-hour school bus drivers, and \$16-an-hour secretaries could pay the same couple hundred dollars per month that \$100,000-a-year principals and central office higher-ups pay.

Unions are taking to the streets in protest, and appealing to the school



SEIU President Andy Stern addresses nearly 200 Portland Public School custodians, nutrition workers and their allies during a rally Jan. 28.

board to change course.

For an hour before the Jan. 28 PPS school board meeting, a crowd of about 200 rallied outside district's 501 North Dixon Street headquarters to focus attention on the district's plans for about 500 custodians and cafeteria workers — who are part of 43,000-member Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 503.

Earlier in the day, the SEIU bargaining team walked out of mediation after getting the district's latest offer, which was worse than the previous one. Under the latest PPS proposal, the highest-paid custodians — head custodians overseeing half a dozen subordinates at the district's biggest high schools — would have their pay cut \$4.11 an hour, from \$23.62 to \$19.51. Head custodians at smaller schools, many with 10 or 20 years of experience at the district, would go from \$18.80 an hour to \$14.92 — a \$3.88-an-hour pay cut. Rank-and-file custodial helpers — who make up the bulk of the district's 300-strong bare-bones custodial crew — would go from \$14 an hour to \$11.43, a \$2.57-an-hour cut. And starting wages would drop from \$13.25 to \$11.15 an hour.

Meanwhile, the district's mostly part-time cafeteria workers, paid wages of \$12.70 an hour, are being offered a 1.5 percent annual increase. Inflation has been about 3 percent a year for the last five years, so cafeteria workers could expect to lose purchasing power each year. And that's before the in-

creased monthly premiums for health care.

The district is proposing to raise its health insurance contribution cap — for all workers — from \$779 to \$800.

The district also proposed to split the bargaining unit in two: cafeteria workers would have one contract, and custodians another. SEIU said no to that.

SEIU's next mediated negotiating session is scheduled for Feb. 5.

SEIU's rally drew powerful supporters, including Oregon Senate Majority Leader (and Oregon Secretary of State candidate) Kate Brown; Oregon House Speaker (and U.S. Senate candidate) Jeff Merkely, plus Steve Novick, his rival for the Democratic U.S. Senate nomination; Oregon State Sen. (and candidate for State Treasurer) Ben Westlund; Oregon House Speaker Pro Tem Diane Rosenbaum; and at least four other candidates for Oregon Attorney General, Portland City Council, and Oregon House.

Portland Association of Teachers President Jeff Miller was also there to show support. In March, the teachers will start their own negotiations with the district.

And SEIU's top brass was in attendance, including Local 503 Executive Director (and international vice president) Leslie Frane, her counterpart Alice Dale from SEIU Local 49, and SEIU's national president Andy Stern.

Stern, who was in Portland as a

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Union membership on the rise Oregon adds 16,000; Washington 30,000

The unionized share of the labor market went up a bit nationwide in 2007, and in Oregon and Washington, according to the most recent annual report by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

Nationally, 12.1 percent of employed wage and salary workers were members of a union in 2007, compared to 12 percent in 2006. Since the work force grew in number, that meant 311,000 more workers were union members, bringing total U.S. union membership to 15.7 million.

According to an analysis by the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR), a nonpartisan think tank, that one-tenth-of-a-percent increase is small, and may reflect statistical variation rather than an actual increase in the union membership share. Still, CEPR said, the uptick is striking because it is the first time since the

BLS began collecting annual union membership rates in 1983 that the union share has increased.

In Oregon, union membership rose to 14.3 percent in 2007, from 13.8 percent in 2006, BLS reported. That meant 227,000 union members, 16,000 more than in 2006. And Washington union membership was the nation's fourth highest, overtaking New Jersey, which was number four the previous year. Washington union membership was 20.2 percent in 2007, a slight increase from 19.8 percent in 2006. Total union membership in Washington rose 30,000 in 2007, to 579,000.

The estimates are based on the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, a nationwide monthly survey of a statistical sample of about 60,000 households. The union membership data comes from one-quarter of the sample and is reported as a percentage

of wage and salary workers; unemployed and self-employed workers are excluded.

According to the BLS report, unionization was highest among public-sector workers, black men and older workers.

Public-sector workers had a union membership rate (35.9 percent) nearly five times that of private sector employees (7.5 percent). Within the public sector, local government workers had the highest union membership rate, 41.8 percent. And among occupational categories, education occupations had among the highest unionization of any, at 37.2 percent.

Within the private sector, the industries with the highest unionization rates were transportation and utilities (22.1 percent), telecommunications (19.7 percent), and construction (13.9

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Welcome, Laborers #320

The Northwest Labor Press would like to welcome Laborers Local 320 as its newest subscribing union.

The Portland-based local represents approximately 1,100 workers in heavy and highway construction (roads, bridges, tunnels), at industrial plants, as well as in the public sector. Its jurisdiction is widespread, extending from Portland South to the Santiam River in Marion County in Salem; East to Arlington covering Sherman, Wasco, and part of Gilliam counties; and West to the North Coast

in Tillamook and Clatsop counties, said Business Manager/Secretary-Treasurer Dave Tischer.

Local 320 members can find their official Meeting Notice on Page 6, and the free Bargain Counter classified ads section on Page 10 of this issue. To submit a free classified ad, e-mail it to Michael492@comcast.net or mail it P.O. Box 13150, Portland, OR 97213.

The Labor Press covers union-related stories in Oregon and Southwest Washington and on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

Free medical screenings for workers at nuclear sites

TRI-CITIES, Wash. — Union construction workers who spent any time at all working at Hanford Reservation, or at any of the hundreds of nuclear weapons program sites in the U.S., are eligible to receive a free medical screening to see if they have been exposed to life-threatening ailments.

The free service is provided through the Building Trades National Medical Screening Program (BTMed), which started in 1996 in cooperation with the Department of Energy. BTMed serves union construction workers from 23 DOE sites, including Hanford, Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory in Scoville, and Amchitka Test Site in Amchitka Island, Alaska.

Mark Ayers, president of the Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO, said BTMed expects to screen 2,400 workers this year. Overall, 16,000 workers (out of some 700,000) have been screened — with more than 3,000 of those having worked at Hanford.

“During the boom years of the 1970s and ‘80s, contractors and subcontractors at Hanford were calling for workers from all over the country,” said Sherry Gosseen, who administers the program at Hanford there through Zenith Administrators. “This program deals with current and former construction workers that have worked at Hanford and other sites.”

Gosseen said the BTMed program at Hanford has recommended referral for treatment of a medical condition to 2,680 of those who completed the first screening, and to 425 of those who completed re-screening.

“In all, we have found 5,716 medical conditions which war-

ranted a recommendation for referral,” Gosseen told the Northwest Labor Press.

For the three key indicators of occupational disease associated with work at Hanford, BCTMed has found that nearly 38 percent of participants with X-rays have lung abnormalities; more than 38 percent of those with breathing tests have decreased lung capacity; 66 percent of those with a hearing test have evidence of work-related noise-induced hearing loss, and 2.7 percent of those with a beryllium test have evidence of sensitization.

Ayers encourages all people who worked with nuclear energy to have a medical screening. “It’s a positive, very easy experience,” he said.

The free screening consists of two steps: a work history interview and a medical exam.

In step one, workers provide a work history interview over the phone to determine what exposure to hazardous material they may have had. In step two, if it is determined that there were exposure risks, the worker would make arrangements to receive a free medical screening examination at a medical provider near their home to test for illnesses that may have developed.

Following the exam, the participant receives a letter indicating any medical findings. If an illness is discovered, BTMed can steer the worker to government-funded benefit programs to treat the illness. Many workers who have undergone the screening program have been eligible to file a claim with the U.S. Department of Labor under the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA).

EEOICPA offers workers medical coverage for the illness from the date the claim was filed, and a compensation lump-sum payment. In addition, the program will assist participants who want to file claims for workers’ compensation for any work-related problem.

Workers who have been screened are invited back for a re-screening three years later. Gosseen encourages workers to re-test. “We are finding significant newly-diagnosed disease in participants who receive a re-screening,” she said.

You may be eligible to participate in the BCTMed program if — You performed construction work (for either the prime contractor or subcontractors) at any time in the past at any of the following DOE sites:

- Hanford Reservation, Richland, Washington
- Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory (INEEL), Scoville, Idaho
- Amchitka Test Site, Amchitka Island, Alaska
- Rocky Flats Plant, Golden, Colorado
- Battelle Laboratories-King Avenue, Columbus, Ohio
- Battelle Laboratories-West Jefferson, Columbus, Ohio
- Brookhaven National Laboratory, Upton, New York
- Brush-Luckey, Luckey, Ohio
- Fernald Closure Project, Fernald, Ohio
- Kansas City Plant, Kansas City, Missouri
- Mallinckrodt Chemical Co, St. Louis, Missouri
- Mound Plant, Miamisburg, Ohio
- Oak Ridge, Knoxville, Tennessee
- Pinellas, Largo, Florida
- Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant, Paducah, Kentucky
- Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant, Piketon, Ohio
- Savannah River Site, Aiken, South Carolina
- Weldon Spring Plant, Weldon Spring, Missouri

— And you think you may have been exposed to any health hazards, including radiation, beryllium, asbestos, silica, mercury, cadmium, nickel, lead or other heavy metals, solvents or degreasers, or any other fumes, vapors or dusts, or noise.

— Or you or your doctor think you have had serious health problems as a result of your Department of Energy work, including anyone who has or has had cancer, serious lung disease or any other serious illness that you think could be caused by toxic exposures.

If you worked at Hanford, call Sherry Gosseen at the Hanford Outreach Office at 1-509-542-9347. If you worked elsewhere, call BCTMed at 1-800-866-9663 or go online for more information at www.btmed.org.

Unitus Credit Union busts CWA

Communications Workers of America (CWA) Local 7901 — the union that represents workers at Qwest and AT&T — is asking unions and their members not to do business with Unitus Community Credit Union.

For more than 30 years, the credit union’s employees were members of CWA. Unitus — formerly known as Oregon Telco Community Credit Union — started as the credit union for telephone company employees. But in 2002 it changed its charter to open up membership to any resident of six Portland-metro-area counties. And in 2004 the credit union changed its name to Unitus. It grew to 65,000 members and \$700 million in deposits.

Unitus’ final union contract expired Nov. 1, 2006. In over a year of negotiations, management refused to budge from its demands for a pay scale based on “market” wages and “merit” bonuses.

In the end, said Local 7901 President Madelyn Elder, Unitus managers campaigned intensively for Unitus workers to vote out the union. Managers held anti-union meetings, distributed anti-union literature, and mailed employees a certified letter telling them how to quit the union. Union staff were only able to talk with

workers after-hours, and by visiting workers at home. Unitus management told workers they could call the police if union representatives came to their homes, Elder said.

“Management put out the word that, ‘All this conflict will go away if you get rid of the union,’” Elder said. “We kept telling them, ‘Yeah, but so will your contract. You’ll be at-will employees.’”

CWA filed several unfair labor practice charges against Unitus, but none were found to have merit by the National Labor Relations Board.

On Dec. 17, in an NLRB-conducted decertification election, the vote was 31 to 31. Because federal law requires that a union demonstrate majority support, a tie in a union election means a loss for the union.

“It was a real heartbreaker,” Elder said.

Now that Unitus is nonunion, CWA Local 7901 plans to withdraw deposits of about \$200,000 from the bank, and take its business to a credit union where workers are union-represented.

United Advantage Northwest Federal Credit Union has agreed to open up membership to CWA. UANW is the credit union for members of Plumbers and Fitters Local 290 and

several printers unions, plus employees of about 60 companies. Workers there are represented by Office and Professional Employees Local 11, which also represents workers at IBEW and United Workers Federal Credit Union; UFCW Northwest Federal Credit Union; and Pacific NW Ironworkers Federal Credit Union.

Elder thinks several hundred CWA members also have accounts at Unitus.

Though withdrawing funds, CWA will keep its Unitus account open so that it can attend the credit union’s March 16 annual meeting.

The Oregon AFL-CIO has deposits of about \$425,000, which it placed at Unitus specifically because workers there were union-represented. Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain said the federation would withdraw the deposits whenever CWA requests it.

CWA’s boycott also has the backing of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council, AFL-CIO, which voted to place Unitus on its “Unfair/Do Not Patronize List.”

Under federal labor law, CWA can request another election in a year’s time if at least a third of the workers still want to be union.



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Feds' stimulus package doesn't do enough for workers

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) — A \$150 billion economic stimulus package unveiled Jan. 24 after week-long talks between Democratic House leaders and the GOP Bush Administration lacks several key provisions that would help workers, national AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said.

Instead, those provisions — extending unemployment benefits, repaving roads, and expanding eligibility for food stamps — would be lumped into a second “stimulus” bill that would come up later this year and that would face rockier sledding on Capitol Hill, due to budget rules and the time crunch from the presidential campaign.

“The ... stimulus proposal simply is not enough to make a real difference for working families,” Sweeney said. “It is up to the Senate to extend unemployment benefits and increase food stamps to get money into the hands of those who will spend it quickest and need it most.”

The national AFL-CIO came up with a five-point stimulus package of its own, which it shared with congressional leaders before they met with the president. The five points political leaders were urged to include in any stimulus package included:

- Extension of unemployment benefits.
- Increased food stamp benefits.
- Tax rebates targeted to middle-income and lower-income taxpayers.
- Fiscal relief for state and local governments to avoid the economically depressing effect of tax increases and budget cuts.
- Acceleration of ready-to-go public investment in school renovations and bridge repair.

Sweeney said “anything less will not be sufficient to keep our economy

from diving headlong into recession.”

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), wasn't “totally pleased” by the proposed bill. “But I do know it'll stimulate the economy,” she said. “If it doesn't, there'll be more to come.”

The key item for workers is individual and family tax rebates, ranging up to \$600 per adult, \$1,200 per couple, and \$300 per child. But the package does not extend jobless benefits beyond 26 weeks, it does not help people who must turn to Medicaid for health care,

nor does it expand food stamps to more people.

“It's a step in the right direction, but simply doesn't go far enough in making a real difference for America's working families,” said Anna Burger, chair of the Change to Win labor federation. “It's time for the leaders in Washington to take bold and immediate action to restore the purchasing power of America's working families.”

Lawmakers and Bush are scrambling to inject money into workers' pockets as signs of a recession appear. Those signs include an 0.3 percent

jump in unemployment in December, to 5 percent; the largest decline in existing home sales in 25 years, and states facing budget deficits that force them to cut Medicaid money.

“New Medicaid regulations are about to shift more costs to the states at a time when they can barely afford to meet current needs,” said Gerald McEntee, president of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

Oregon Congressman Earl Blumenauer of Portland, a member of the Ways and Means and Budget committees, said the proposed stimulus package will provide “broad-based relief for lower and middle-income families.”

However, he was disappointed that it didn't contain food stamps or unemployment benefits. “Removing these provisions underlines the misplaced priorities of President Bush and his allies in Congress,” Blumenauer said. “By allowing the process to work and encouraging the public to weigh in, I would hope that we could make this package better.”

U.S. Rep. Brian Baird of Washington said he believes that people would rather have a job than a check.

“It is clear that this problem goes beyond cutting a one-time check or tax

cut,” he said. “We should take this opportunity to invest immediately in infrastructure projects that will better our country's future and provide jobs today. By investing in our roads, bridges, and highways, we will be creating jobs, helping workers put food on the table, and in the process, we will generate a lasting public good that will go beyond a few hundred dollars.”

An infusion of cash into the infrastructure is unlikely at this time, according to Senate Budget Committee Chairman Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.).

He said Congress' reaction overall is that infrastructure “should be part of the second stimulus package.” The same thing goes for extending jobless benefits beyond their current 26-week

limit.

Republicans and Democrats on the Senate Finance Committee are currently developing an economic stimulus package of their own. Republicans are concentrating on business tax cuts, although they and Bush have dropped their insistence that the bill should make his 2001 and 2003 tax cuts for the rich permanent. Those tax cuts are due to expire in 2010.

Lawmakers initially wanted to have a stimulus bill sent to the president by Feb. 15. That timeline has been moved up and a bill could be voted on this week. (A vote had not been taken in either the House or Senate as this issue of the NW Labor Press went to press).

'The...stimulus proposal simply is not enough to make a real difference for working families.'




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Established in 1900 at Portland, Oregon
as a voice of the labor movement.

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Published on a semi-monthly basis on the first and third Fridays of each month by the Oregon Labor Press Publishing Co. Inc., a non-profit corporation owned by 20 unions and councils including the Oregon AFL-CIO. Serving more than 120 union organizations in Oregon and SW Washington. Subscriptions \$13.75 per year for union members.

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...Union card means higher wages compared to nonunion

(From Page 1)

percent).

Notably, construction unions increased membership faster than the rate of job growth; the unionization rate was 13 percent in 2006.

Manufacturing, on the other hand, lost unionized jobs faster than the sector's overall decline in employment. Union membership in manufacturing fell to 11.3 percent in 2007 from 11.7 percent in 2006. Manufacturing jobs were once identified with unionized employment, but today manufacturing workers are less likely to be in a union than the average U.S. worker.

Industries with the lowest unionization were agriculture (1.5 percent) and finance (2 percent).

Older workers were more likely to be union than younger workers — 16.1 percent of workers age 55 to 64 and 15.7 percent of workers 45 to 54

were union, while just 4.8 percent workers 16 to 24 were union.

Unionization was higher for men (13.0 percent) than for women (11.1 percent). But the gap has narrowed since 1983, when the rate for men was about 10 percentage points higher than the rate for women. Since then, unionization rates have declined for both men and women, but faster for men.

Blacks were more likely to be union members (14.3 percent) than whites (11.8 percent), Asians (10.9 percent), or Hispanics (9.8 percent). And within racial categories, black men had the highest union membership rate (15.8 percent) while Hispanic women had the lowest (9.6 percent).

And full-time workers were twice as likely as part-time workers to be union members (13.2 compared with 6.5 percent).

About 1.6 million workers were

represented by a union, while not being union members themselves. Slightly more than half of them were employed in government.

Union members had median weekly earnings of \$863 (which works out to \$44,876 a year), while nonunion workers had median weekly earnings of \$663 (\$34,476 a year). Having a union to negotiate wages explains part of the difference, the BLS report explained, but there are other factors as well: union workers are more likely to be in higher-wage states, industries and occupations, and working for larger employers.

New York had the highest unionization rate (25.2 percent), followed by Alaska (23.8 percent), Hawaii (23.4 percent), and Washington (20.2 percent). Lowest in the nation was North

Carolina (3.0 percent); next lowest were Virginia (3.7 percent), South Carolina (4.1 percent), Georgia (4.4 percent), and Texas (4.7 percent).

Just six states accounted for nearly half of the nation's 15.7 million union members: California, with 2.5 million; New York, 2.1 million; Illinois, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, with 0.8 million; and New Jersey, with 0.7 million. Combined, the six states had 7.8 million union members.

For the first time, the unionization rate in the West (14.7 percent) exceeded the unionization rate in the Midwest (13.8 percent). California, which added over 200,000 union members in 2007, was where much of the growth took place. Illinois, conversely, weathered the largest loss of union membership of any state in

2007, as its share of unionized workers fell from 16.4 percent to 14.5 percent.

Union membership as a proportion of the workforce is still well below 20.1 percent, which was where it stood in 1983, the first year for which comparable data are available.

Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain admitted to some surprise at the union membership rise.

"Corporate America has been trying to drive a stake through our heart," Chamberlain said. "But folks are figuring out how to organize even in the most difficult conditions."

And in survey after survey, Chamberlain said, a majority of American workers say they want a union.

The full report is available online at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.toc.htm>.

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With the Teamsters

UPS Freight workers in Seattle sign union cards

An overwhelming majority of workers at the UPS Freight (formerly Overnite Transportation) terminals in the Seattle and Oakland, California, areas have signed authorization cards to become Teamsters. About 300 drivers and dockworkers are employed at the terminals, bringing the total number of UPS Freight workers who have submitted cards to more than 1,100 since last week, Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa announced.

"Now more than 1,100 workers at UPS Freight have taken the step to a more secure future," Hoffa said. "The momentum is moving this campaign forward fast."

The Seattle-area workers are employed at terminals in Tukwila and in Kent, and seek to join Teamsters Local 174 in Seattle.

"In recent years, we have fallen behind in this industry, so it's great to see UPS Freight workers joining the Teamsters to gain the job security, fair pay and excellent benefits they deserve," said Rick Hicks, secretary-treasurer of Local 174.

In addition to the workers in Oakland and Seattle, a majority of 833 workers in New England, Memphis and Detroit have submitted cards to become Teamsters.

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Apollo Alliance maps strategy for '09 Legislature

Members of the Oregon Apollo Alliance met Jan. 22 to plan strategy for the 2009 Oregon Legislature. The Apollo Alliance is a coalition of union, business and environmental groups that is calling for major government investment in alternative energy as a way to create new high-paying jobs for American workers. The group's Oregon chapter was formed last year.

Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski will be proposing to enact major legislation next year to reduce the state's contribution to global warming. Kulongoski is taking part in the Western Climate Initiative, in which six Western states

and two Canadian provinces are devising a regional approach to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. And Oregon House and Senate committees are meeting this year with business and environmental groups to draft bills that will be introduced when the Legislature returns for its regular biennial session in January 2009.

Oregon Apollo, chaired by Oregon AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Barbara Byrd, wants to ensure that organized labor is at the table during those discussions.

"If we're not at the table raising the issue of jobs," Byrd told the Labor Press, "it doesn't get raised."

By way of example, Byrd points to major legislation the Oregon Legislature passed last year on renewable energy, including a big increase in a tax credit and new mandates for utilities to meet. Labor came late to the discussion, and had little success getting job standards into those laws. As a result, there's no assurance that the investments sparked by those laws will employ local skilled workers at a living wage.

"We don't want to see a lot of money thrown at this problem with no

economic impact in this state," Byrd said. "We can't afford to waste this opportunity."

At the Jan. 22 Apollo Alliance meeting, Jeremiah Baumann from the group Environment Oregon gave union attendees an intro to "cap-and-trade." Cap-and-trade is the regulatory model that's most likely to win approval next year in the Oregon Legislature. A version of it is already up and running in the European Union, and another is about to begin New England, which has a multi-state climate change compact similar to the one the Western Climate Initiative is working to create.

The way cap-and-trade works, government sets a maximum level of greenhouse gases and then issues permits to emitters. About 80 percent of the greenhouse gas emissions Oregonians are responsible for come from transportation and electricity generation. So in the most likely scenario, electric utilities and gas companies would be the ones required to hold permits for greenhouse gas emissions. The allowable limit would go down every year, so that utilities and gas companies would have to do some-

thing to reduce fossil fuel use. But the permits could be traded, so that a market system would determine the cheapest way to achieve the reductions. If government auctions the permits, that could generate resources that can also be used to fund energy efficiency improvements or other priorities.

On the whole, Baumann said, the cost per kilowatt hour would go up under a cap-and-trade system of greenhouse gas reduction, but electricity users' bills would stay the same be-

cause efficiency improvements would reduce the amount of electricity used.

The Oregon Legislature begins a special session Feb. 4. While it's a short session that won't take up major legislation, at least two bills will address climate change. One, sponsored by House Rep. Brad Witt (D-Clatskanie) would retrofit state buildings to improve energy efficiency. The other would spell out more details about a new Climate Change Commission that lawmakers approved last year.

Labor bowl for MDA to roll April 22


The 19th annual Labor Bowl Challenge to benefit the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) will be held Sunday, April 27, from 1 to 4 p.m. at Cascade Lanes, 2700 NE 82nd Ave., Portland. Registration starts at noon.

Portland area labor unions have collected \$276,041 for the charity since its inception. Money raised from pledges and a silent auction helps provide wheelchairs and braces

for youngsters, medical care, research and summer camps.

Pledge packets are available at the Northwest Oregon Labor Council or by calling Tor at MDA at 503-223-3177.

For more information, call Kelly Pendell, a member of Letter Carriers Branch 82 and coordinator of the event, at 503-493-5903.



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Official Notices

Boilermakers 500

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

Carpenters 1388

Members meet 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 6, at 276 Warner-Milne Rd., Oregon City.

Carpenters 1715

Members meet 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 19, preceded by a 5 p.m. Executive Board meeting at 612 E. McLoughlin, Vancouver, Wash.

Cement Masons 555

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

Clark, Skamania & W. Klickitat Counties Labor Council

Delegates meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 28, 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, Feb. 5 and Feb. 12, at Kirkland Union Manor II, 3535 SE 86th, Portland.

Electrical Workers 48

Marine Unit meets 5 p.m. Monday, Feb. 25. Residential Unit meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 13. General membership meets 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 27.

Wasco Unit meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 13, at the Wasco PUD, 2345 River Rd., The Dalles.

Coast Unit meets 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 13, at Astoria Labor Temple, 926 Duane St., Astoria.

EWMC meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 13, in the Executive Boardroom.

Sound & Communication Unit meets 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 13.

Electrical Women of Local 48 meet 6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 19, at NIETC, 16021 NE Airport Way.

Executive Board meets 6:30 p.m. Wednesdays, Feb. 6 and Feb. 20.

Bylaws Committee meets 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 26, in the Executive Boardroom.

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

DEATH ASSESSMENT: The following death assessment has been declared for Feb. and is payable at 50 cents: No. 2166, Morris T. Nelson.

Electrical Workers 280

Executive Board meets 1 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 6, at 32969 Hwy. 99E, Tangent.

Bend Unit meets 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 14, at the IBEW/UA Training Center, 2161 SW First St., Redmond.

Joint Unit meets 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 21, at 33309 Hwy. 99E, Tangent.

Elevator Constructors 23

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

Exterior & Interior Specialists 2154

Members meet 5 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 20, at 1125 SE Madison, Suite 207, Portland.

Fire Fighters 452

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

Fire Fighters 1660

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

Glass Workers 740

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

Portland area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 7, at 11145 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

Eugene area members meet 5 p.m. Monday, Feb. 11, at Best Western Grand Manor Inn, 971 Kruse Way, Springfield.

Salem area members meet 5 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 12, at Candalaria Terrace, Suite 204, 2659 Commercial St. SE, Salem.

Iron Workers 29

Members meet 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 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, Feb. 14, at 11620 NE Ainsworth Cir. #300, Portland.

Insulators 36

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

Laborers 320

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

Laborers 483

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

Laborers/Vancouver 335

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

Labor Roundtable of Southwest Washington

Delegates meet 8 a.m. Friday, Feb. 15, at Home Town Buffet, 7809-B Vancouver Plaza, Vancouver, Wash.

Lane, Coos, Curry & Douglas Building Trades

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

Linn-Benton-Lincoln Labor Council

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

Linoleum Layers 1236

Executive Board meets 5 p.m. Monday, Feb. 4, at 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

Portland area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 28, at 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

Marion-Polk-Yamhill Labor Council

Executive Board meets 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 12, followed by a 7 p.m. general meeting at SEIU Local 503, 1730 Commercial St. SE, Salem.

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Metal Trades Council

Executive Board meets 8 a.m. Monday, Feb. 11, at NOLC board room, 1125 SE Madison, Portland.

Delegates meet 5 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 26, at IBEW #48 Hall, 15937 NE Airport Way, Portland.

Mid-Columbia Labor Council

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

Millwrights & Machinery Erectors 711

Members meet 10 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 23, preceded by a 9 a.m. Executive Committee meeting, at the Carpenters Local 247 Hall, 2205 N. Lombard St., Portland.

Northwest Oregon Labor Council

The February meetings have been canceled.

Operating Engineers 701

District 5 members meet 6:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 1, at Gladstone Union Hall, 555 E. First St., Gladstone.

District 1 members meet 8 p.m. Friday, Feb. 1, at

Gladstone Union Hall, 555 E. First St., Gladstone.

District 3 members meet 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 5, at North Bend/Coos Bay Labor Center, 3427 Ash St., North Bend.

District 3 members meet 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 6, at Rogue Regency Inn, 2300 Biddle Rd., Medford. Please note new location.

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

District 1 members meet 7:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 11, at Longview Electricians Hall, 1145 Commerce Ave.

District 4 members meet 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 12, at Cousin's Restaurant, 2115 W. 6th, The Dalles.

District 4 members meet 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 14, at DTC Office, 148 Main St., Hermiston.

Painters & Drywall Finishers 10

Members meet 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 20, at 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., 2nd Floor, Portland. PLEASE NOTE: Receive a free T-shirt for attending the membership meetings. NOTE: Trail Blazer tickets will be raffled off at this meeting.

Pile Drivers, Divers & Shipwrights 2416

Members meet 7 p.m. Friday, Feb. 22, preceded by a 6 p.m. Executive Board meeting, at 2205 N. Lombard, Portland.

Plasterers 82

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

Portland City & Metropolitan Employees 189

Executive Board meets 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 12.

General membership meets 6:15 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 26.

Meetings are held at 6025 E. Burnside St., Portland.

Roofers & Waterproofers 49

Executive Board meets 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 7.

Members meet 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 14. Meetings are at 5032 SE 26th Ave, Portland. (Phone: 503 232-4807)

Salem Building Trades

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

Sheet Metal Workers 16

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

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

Medford area members meet 5 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 13, at Wild River Pizza, 2684 N. Pacific Hwy., Medford.

Eugene area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 14, at the Local 16 Hall, 4748 Franklin Blvd., Eugene.

Coos Bay area members meet 5 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 21, at the Labor Temple, 3427 Ash St., North Bend.

Sign Painters & Paint Makers 1094

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

Southern Oregon Central Labor Council

Delegates meet 6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 12, at the Labor Temple, 4480 Rogue Valley Hwy. #3, Central Point.

Southwestern Oregon Central Labor Council

Delegates meet 6 p.m. Monday, Feb. 4, at the Bay Area Labor Center, 3427 Ash, North Bend.

USW 1097

Members meet 6:45 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 6, preceded by a 5:45 p.m. Executive Board meeting, at the Union Office, 91237 Old Mill Town Rd., Westport.

Retiree Meeting Notices

ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED AMERICANS OREGON CHAPTER

Executive Board meets 10 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 14, in the Northwest Oregon Labor Council board room, at 1125 SE Madison, Portland.

Retirees meet 10 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 28, 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, Feb. 11, at JJ North's Grand Buffet, 10520 NE Halsey, Portland.

ELECTRICAL WORKERS 48

Retired Electricians of Local 48, wives and friends meet 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 12, at Steamers Restaurant, 8303 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland. A brief business meeting and drawing will follow. Ample parking available. For further information and reserva-

tions, please call Vera Larson at 503 252-2296.

ELECTRICAL WORKERS 280

Retirees meet between 11:45 a.m. and noon Monday, Feb. 11, at The Old Country Buffet on Lancaster in Salem, which is next to Michael's Craft Store.

If you have any questions, please give Don Ball a call at 541-327-3388.

GLASS WORKERS 740

Retirees meet 11 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 19, at JJ North's Grand Buffet, 10520 NE Halsey, Portland.

INSULATORS 36

Retiree breakfast 9:30 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 7, at the Dockside Restaurant, 2047 NW Front Ave., Portland.

NORTHWEST OREGON LABOR RETIREES COUNCIL

Business meeting from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Monday, Feb. 11, in the Northwest Oregon Labor Council board room, at 1125 SE Madison #100G, Portland.

OREGON AFSCME

Retirees meet 10 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 19, at the AFSCME office, 6025 E. Burnside, Portland. Call Michael Arken for information at 503-239-9858, ext. 124.

SHEET METAL 16

Retirees meet 11:30 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 14, at JJ North's Grand Buffet, 10520 NE Halsey, Portland.

TRANSIT 757

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

Eugene/Springfield grocery workers ratify new pacts

EUGENE — Following more than 12 months of bargaining, grocery clerks, meatcutters and central checkout employees finally have new contract with area grocers in Eugene-Springfield.

About 1,100 workers — members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555 — ratified new four-year contracts Jan. 17 by margins of 90 to 100 percent. The contracts run retroactive to when they expired in February 2007. The union workers are employed at Safeway stores, Supervalu (which now owns Albertsons), and Kroger (parent company of Fred Meyer).

Some of the key provisions in the deal include hard-money wage increases (not bonuses in lieu of wages, as employers initially tried to get). Wages will increase \$1.30 an hour over the life of the agreement, retroactive to February 2007. There will be no health reimbursement accounts (which would have resulted in large increases in deductibles), and employees may volunteer to work Christmas Day, but can't be scheduled to work.

Union officials said grocers came to the table with more than 40 takeaway items.

"This (settlement) happened not because the

employers felt generous, but because our Bargaining Committee was firm in what they wanted, and the community and membership in the Eugene/Springfield area stood strong," said Local 555 Secretary-Treasurer Jeff McDonald.

UFCW knew going in that negotiations would be difficult, so they began preparing a year in advance of the expiration date. Meetings were held monthly to inform members on important bargaining issues, such as how pensions work, how the health and welfare trust operates, and the importance of language in the contract.

"These meetings gave the membership the knowledge and ability to understand and talk with the management negotiators," McDonald said. It also didn't go unnoticed that during negotiations members held several community rallies to show their solidarity. They also voted to authorize a strike by an overwhelming margin.

UFCW now turns its attention to bargaining grocery, meat and central checkout contracts at Safeway, Albertsons and Fred Meyer stores in Vancouver, Wash., Salem, Corvallis, Medford, Roseburg, Coos Bay and Brookings.

Contracts in The Dalles and Hood River expire May 31. Contracts expire in Portland, Bend, and Newport July 26.



Members of UFCW Local 555 vote on new grocery contracts Jan. 17 at the Lane Events Center (Fairgrounds Auditorium) in Eugene. Contracts for grocery clerks, meatcutters and central checkout employees were ratified by wide margins.

Washington labor turns attention to Olympia

OLYMPIA — Washington's labor movement will be paying close attention to Olympia in the next two months, and pushing for passage of a handful of bills that would expand worker rights.

The State Legislature meets annually in Washington, with shorter, 60-day sessions in even-numbered years.

The Washington State Labor Council, the statewide AFL-CIO body, identified several bills as priorities in the Legislature's 2008 session, which began Jan. 14:

- Expanding the collective bargaining rights of graduate teaching and research assistants.** Grad students working at the University of Washington won the right to unionize in 2002, and today about 4,700 belong to United Auto Workers Local 4121. Now a bill would extend union rights to about 1,700 graduate assistants at Washington State University, which has campuses in Pullman and Vancouver.

- Restoring unemployment insurance benefits to workers locked out by their employers during labor disputes in multi-employer bargaining units.** A lockout is the employer equivalent of a strike. The grocery industry is an example of where this would make a difference. The United Food and Commercial Workers Union negotiates area-wide contracts with an employer association. In some cases, if the union can't get an acceptable contract, workers may strike just one employer; employers, in solidarity, then might lock out workers at another employer to starve the union back to the table. If employers know the locked out workers will get unemployment insurance, they'll be much less likely to use that tactic.

- Giving whistleblower protection to state workers.** This is the top priority of the Washington State Labor Council's biggest affiliate — the 40,000-member

Washington Federation of State Employees. WFSE, part of AFSCME, has more than doubled in the last five years since the passage of a law that gave state workers the right to bargain a union contract.

- Granting benefits while a worker's compensation case is being appealed.** Right now, says WSLC President Rick Bender, workers whose claims are denied don't get benefits while they appeal the rejection, and many who have been wrongly denied

benefits are forced by economic hardship to settle their cases.

WSLC is also backing Gov. Chris Gregoire's "Climate Action and Green Jobs" bill. The bill would direct the State Department of Ecology to design a regional carbon "cap and trade" proposal; require annual emissions reporting by all significant generators of greenhouse gases; and create new "green collar jobs" programs to provide training and apprenticeship opportunities.

And labor is supporting several

health care reform proposals. One would create a work group to design a comprehensive health insurance program for Washingtonians. Another would require insurance companies to justify any rate hikes to the state insurance commissioner.

"The good news is we won't be playing much defense," Bender said. Democrats have the governor's office and a substantial majority in the Legislature, including 34 of the 49 state senators, and 66 of the 98 state representatives.

ATU #757 calls off ambulance strike in Josephine County

GRANTS PASS — Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757 has called off an unfair labor practice strike at American Medical Response (AMR) in Josephine County.

Paramedics and EMTs gave notice to strike Jan. 17 after the company refused to provide financial documents to support a claim that it was losing money in Josephine County that required deep financial cuts from its 33 bargaining unit employees.

A week after receiving the strike notice, AMR changed its position on the documents, and the union received some of them.

"We have sent those documents to our CPA for analysis," said ATU Local 757 President Jon Hunt. "These documents were the key reason for our strike. Now that AMR is providing the documents, we believe the need for the strike is over."

A federal mediator called the parties back into negotiations Jan. 17 that lasted for 12 hours. The parties are scheduled to meet again with the mediator on Feb. 11.

Supreme Court rejects case by Enron investors, union workers

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) — Unions and advocates for workers and shareholders who have lost billions of dollars to corporate fraud over the last several years were disappointed by the U.S. Supreme Court's Jan. 22 ruling in a case involving Enron.

In a ruling without comment, the justices rejected a case by Enron investors — led by the University of California — who said the banks that colluded with Enron on the shady deals that led to its collapse should be open to lawsuits, too.

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans turned that down. Last week the High Court did, too.

Unions and worker pension funds were among the investors who joined the university in arguing that the banks and other colluders in such cases should be legally liable for the losses, too.

Instead, the justices said only the

company involved — Enron in this case — can be taken to trial by anyone who charges their money was fraudulently lost. The court's ruling disappointed the AFL-CIO. The federation's Office of Investment has actively supported shareholders — including union pension funds — challenging not just the mismanaged companies but also the bankers.

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney even connected the court's ruling to the Bush Administration, saying it reflects the court's direction since it declared Bush won the 2000 presidential election.

"For the last five years, lower courts have been considering whether the powerful, politically connected financial institutions at the center of the Enron fraud will have to answer to investors for what they did. Now we have the final answer

from the Supreme Court: They will not. "The Enron financial fraud cost America's working families tens of billions of dollars in lost retirement assets," Sweeney continued. "For thousands of Enron employees, whose 401(k) plans were locked into Enron stock, the losses were personally catastrophic."

That included unionized employees at Portland General Electric in Portland, represented by Electrical Workers Local 125.

"At the center of the fraud were deals Enron did with major financial institutions, whose clear purpose was to hide the true state of Enron's finances," Sweeney said. "...The decision not to hear a case that corporate big shots do not want heard fits very nicely with the overall direction of our legal system since Bush v. Gore."

BOLI survey will evaluate HVAC testing, balancing work

The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) will survey contractors who test, balance and adjust HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) control systems this spring to determine whether or not they should have their own wage classification under state prevailing wage laws.

Testing and balancing of HVAC controls follows the installation of the HVAC system. Installation is performed by Sheet Metal Workers.

Oregon's prevailing wage law requires employees on state-funded construction projects be paid wage rates comparable to wages paid for similar work in the area where the project is located. Thirty-one states have such laws, and of 16 states that BOLI contacted (including Washington), all recognize testing, balancing

and adjusting (TAB) work as covered under the Sheet Metal classification.

Independent and nonunion TAB contractors in Oregon say that TAB work is an industry unto itself and that it should either be exempt from prevailing wage laws, or at least have its own wage rate classification separate from the Sheet Metal rate.

Portland-based Sheet Metal Workers Local 16 disagrees.

"TAB is a big part of our industry," said Willy Myers, a business agent for Local 16. He said the union's HVAC & Metals Institute offers TAB certification classes to its apprentices and journey-level workers and that all of its signatory HVAC contractors perform TAB work.

The issue over TAB wages surfaced last summer when a nonunion crew working for Beaverton-based

Accurate Balancing Agency Inc. at the Madras State Prison filed a wage claim with BOLI citing prevailing wage law requirements. A BOLI investigator was sent to the worksite in Central Oregon, where he determined that workers should be paid at the prevailing wage rate for Sheet Metal Workers. BOLI said the employees were owed back-wages and penalties totaling nearly \$100,000.

Accurate Balancing Agency Inc. cried "foul," claiming that a BOLI determination in 2003 stated that TAB work was exempt from prevailing wage laws. That, in turn, set off a firestorm among open shop contractors, who threatened to sue the agency. Some of those contractors called state and federal lawmakers to complain.

Labor Commissioner Dan Gardner told the NW Labor Press that wage rates for TAB workers on public-works projects have never been challenged before.

Gardner said work is not subject to prevailing wage laws if, "20 percent or less is physical in nature." He said that when Accurate Balancing sought a wage clarification in 2003, the owner characterized the work as not physical.

"Based on the 2003 characterization of the work provided by Accurate Balancing, our agency provided an appropriate response, (that it was exempt)" Gardner said.

However, when the BOLI investigator was called in, he witnessed work

that was physical in nature more than 20 percent of the time.

Gardner said BOLI can make companies pay up to six years in back wages if workers are improperly classified.

With a complaint on file, Gardner decided to appoint a subcommittee of the Prevailing Wage Rate Advisory Committee to look at the matter. The Advisory Committee is part of BOLI, established in 1995 by the Oregon Legislature to assist the labor commissioner in administering prevailing wage laws. The subcommittee consisted of an equal number of union and open shop HVAC and TAB contractors, union and open shop reps, and industry lobbyists.

Gardner said, the subcommittee agreed to compile a survey of the TAB industry. A new committee is now meeting to craft the details of what

that survey will look like. Gardner doesn't expect the survey to be distributed for at least 90 days.

NOTE: The BOLI investigation at Madras prompted Sheet Metal Workers Local 16 to file a similar complaint in Washington State on behalf of employees working for Accurate Balancing Agency Inc. It seems that some of the employees at Madras had also worked on public works projects in Washington for basically the same wages they were getting in Oregon.

An investigation by the Washington Department of Labor and Industries' Employment Standards Section found the company paid workers between \$10 and \$20 an hour for work that was supposed to be paid between \$23.29 and \$36.74 an hour. The company was ordered to pay 11 workers \$34,283 in back wages and benefits.

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Three Carpenters locals endorse John Kroger for attorney general

Carpenters Union Locals 247 in Portland, 1065 in Salem and Exterior and Interior Specialists Local 2154 (drywall hangers) have endorsed John Kroger for Oregon attorney general in the Democratic primary.

Kroger, a Lewis & Clark Law School professor and a former federal prosecutor is seeking the post being vacated by Democrat Hardy Myers, who is retiring and will not seek a fourth term in office.

"We need an aggressive attorney general that will defend the rights of workers and prosecute those that abuse our laws," said Joe Baron, chairman of the Metrowide Endorsement Committee for the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners and a member of Carpenters Local 247. "We need someone that will take a proactive and visible role. John Kroger will be that kind of attorney general."

"These endorsements show that people want an attorney general who will fight for every single Oregonian," Kroger said about the endorsements. "Every day in office I'm going to stand up for workers when labor laws are being violated and I'm going to work closely with the business community to build a healthy and sustainable economy."

Kroger also has backing from former Gov. John Kitzhaber, and City Commissioners Erik Sten, Dan Saltzman and Randy Leonard.

His opponent in the Democratic primary is three-term state Rep. Greg Macpherson of Lake Oswego. No Republicans have filed to run for the office.

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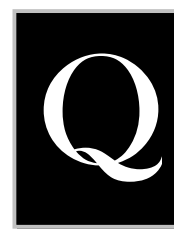
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Steelworkers campaign against toxic imports

"Get the Lead Out" — a campaign by the United Steelworkers against toxic imports — held demonstrations Jan. 16 at 100 congressional district offices, including Portland.

The campaign comes in the wake of a spate of product recalls, particularly of imported toys made in China that contained lead. USW is demanding that Congress do something to protect Americans from unsafe imports.

Outside U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith's downtown Portland office, several dozen union members — including Ron Rodgers (pictured right) a member of Albany Steelworkers Local 7150 — came out in 35 degree weather for a 45-minute rally. Demonstrators called on Smith to co-sponsor the U.S. Food and Product Responsibility Act, a bill introduced last September by Ohio Sen. Sherrod Brown that would require importers to



purchase insurance or otherwise guarantee they can cover the costs of recalls and product liability suits.

Thus far the bill has just one co-sponsor, Sen. Robert Casey (D-Penn).

IN MEMORIAM

Herman Jobelmann, a former president of Portland-based American Federation of Musicians Local 99, died Jan. 13 of heart failure. He was 94.

Jobelmann was born in Portland on May 20, 1913. He grew up in Northwest Portland and attended Lincoln High School and Multnomah College.

He played his first professional job at age 17 while still in high school.

Jobelmann played with the Portland Symphony Orchestra for 25 years and was principal bass for 12 years. He served as principal bass and personnel manager of the Oregon Symphony until the early 1980s.

In 1983, he married India Zerbe, who played principal cello in the Oregon Symphony for 25 years.

Jobelmann taught music at Multnomah College, the University of Portland, Portland State University and Lewis and Clark College. He also worked with the Portland Youth Philharmonic as a teacher and mentor for many years.

Jobelmann joined Musicians Local 99 in October 1934. He served in the 1960s as a vice president and Executive Board member. He held the post of president from 1988-1996, when he decided to retire to make room for new leadership. However, he returned as a member of the Executive Board in 1999 and remained in that post until his death.

He also held Musician union cards in New York Local 802 and Los Angeles Local 47.

In 2007 he was inducted into the Oregon Music Hall of Fame.

Jobelmann is survived by his wife; two stepdaughters, Cynthia Van Vleck and Lydia Weber; and four grandchildren.

Magdalena "Maggie" Jacobsen died Jan. 6 of breast cancer. She was 67.

Jacobsen was appointed by President Clinton to the the National Mediation Board in 1993. Prior to that she served as a mediator with the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, both in Portland and San Francisco.

She was born July 26, 1940, in New York City, the daughter of a tugboat captain. She started her career in 1962 as a flight attendant for Continental Airlines, became a representative of her union — the Steward and Stewardess Division of the Airline Pilots Association, and was elected national secretary-treasurer of the union that represented over 20,000 flight attendants who flew on 20 air carriers.

In the early 1970s Jacobsen completed studies at the AFL-CIO Labor Studies Program and Harvard University's Trade Union Program.

In 2002 Jacobsen started a private practice as a mediator and arbitrator in Washington State. She moved to Camas, Wash., in 2005.

Jacobsen is survived by her husband, Bruce Henricus, a retired Teamster official; two sisters, Jean Jacobsen and Annette Allen; and a brother, Waldemar Jacobsen.

The family requests that offerings in her memory be sent to the Susan G. Komen for the Cure in Dallas, Texas, and/or the Ray Hicky Hospice House in Vancouver, Wash.

Marie Frances Strickler, a retired director and treasurer of Food and Drug Clerks Local 1092 Federal Credit Union, died Nov. 10. She was 93.



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- Counseling management in the development and application of labor relations policies and practices.
- Verifying adherence to terms of labor contracts by monitoring day-to-day implementation of policies concerning wages, hours, and working conditions.
- Serving as a resource to negotiators by providing information on provisions of current contract and significance of proposed changes.
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...Stern speaks at Portland School rally

(From Page 1)

guest speaker for the Lezak Lecture Series, skipped an honorary dinner to speak to rally-goers.

"On behalf of the 2 million members of this union," Stern said, "I want to say this loud and clear to the school board: 'Whatever it takes, for as long as it takes, we are not going backwards again.'"

A day later (after this issue went to press) the union representing 1,300 PPS secretaries, special ed assistants, and other classifications held an informational picket outside Benson High School. The Portland Federation of Teachers and Classified Employees Local 111, an affiliate of American Federation of Teachers-Oregon, hasn't been able to get so much as a cost-of-living increase in more than nine months of negotiations. PFTCE is also in mediation; the next scheduled negotiation session is Feb. 26.

Amalgamated Transit Union Local

757, which represents 85 special education school bus drivers, is in the same position: drawn out bargaining, no agreement, and no willingness by the district to keep wages up with inflation.

District administrators, meanwhile, have received raises well above inflation.

At their Jan. 28 meeting, PPS Board members entered the room together through a side entrance, rather than walk through the union crowd, which filled the room and spilled out into the hall in back. The front row was stacked with custodians with paper signs safety-pinned to their shirts showing how much they'd lose in wages under the district's proposal: '\$483 a month,' '\$712 a month,' '\$664 a month.'

The board took public comment from three people, then had a short meeting followed by an executive session to discuss labor negotiations. The executive session was closed to the press and the public.

Meeting Notice Announcements For Members of Plumbers and Fitters Local 290

Portland area members meet 7:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 15, at 20210 SW Teton Ave., Tualatin. PLEASE NOTE: At the Feb. 15 meeting we will be voting on the monetary distributions for April and October 2008.

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

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

Brookings area members meet 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 26, at Curry County Search and Rescue, 417 Railroad St., Brookings.

Coos Bay area members meet 7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 19, at the Coos Bay Training Center, 2nd & Kruse, Coos Bay.

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

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

Medford area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 21, at 650A Industrial Circle, White City.

Roseburg area members meet 5 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 21, at 742 Roberts, Roseburg.

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

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

Humboldt-Del Norte Co. area members meet 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 20, at the Eureka Training Center, 832 E St., Eureka, CA.

RETIREES

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

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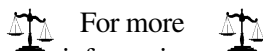
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Oregon's initiative system in need of some repairs

By **JOE BAESSLER**

A recent Portland City Club report that calls for overhauling Oregon's initiative and referendum system has, predictably, created a maelstrom of comments from both friends and foes of the current way of doing things. Those who think the system is just fine the way it is accuse "special interests" of trying to sabotage the system. Many who agree with the report want wholesale changes immediately. Surely there must be some reasonable middle ground.

Few can argue that Oregon's initiative and referendum system is, in 2007, nothing like Oregon's founding fathers had in mind. Right or wrong, things have changed. True "grass-roots" initiative campaigns are few and far between. People like Bill Sizemore

and Kevin Mannix have created cottage industries out of placing initiatives on the ballot. While their supporters are among the first to decry that "special interests" want to emasculate the current system, it's an ironic fact that Sizemore — in particular — has become a virtual special interest unto himself.

It is true that our organization — the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) — has had historical concerns about abuses within the current system. Given the high number of initiatives that Sizemore has aimed directly at public employees, can you blame us? Yet we have never called for abolishing Oregon's revered initiative system. We do believe the system has warranted occasional tweaks over time.

Case in point: In the mid- to late-1990s, it became apparent that the entire signature gathering system was running amok. Initiatives had become such big business that those in the signature-gathering field were tempted to cheat. So we played a major role in two bills that reformed — not eliminated — the process. As a result, current Oregon law says you must pay signature gatherers by the hour, rather than on a per signature (or "bounty") basis. We were also key backers of HB 3053 in the 1999 Oregon Legislature that brought a scientifically valid for-



JOE BAESSLER

mula to the method by which initiative signatures are verified. And in 2007, we helped champion HB 2082, which simply requires chief petitioners that pay signature gatherers to register those gatherers. All of these laws are reasonable checks and balances to ensure that the "John Hancock" on initiative petition sheets indeed belong to John Hancock.

The Portland City Club report is 76 pages long. We don't agree with every word or every recommendation. But we do believe the report should be required reading for the 2009 Oregon Legislature. It is completely reason-

able for that body to review the current system and debate if and where fixes are needed.

We'd also like to add one idea to the mix that's not included in the city club report. In Nevada, there is a process for that state's Supreme Court to review potentially unconstitutional initiatives before they're placed before voters. This is an option Oregon should strongly consider. How many times have we seen divisive campaigns over initiatives here that end up in court, only to be ultimately thrown out as unconstitutional? Where is the down side in determining the question of constitutionality before people on either side of an issue invest time, money and energy either supporting or fighting a measure? It doesn't matter what your political persuasion is — liberal, conservative, moderate or otherwise — you feel "cheated" if your cause passes a vote of the people only to be struck down after the fact by a court. And while such judicial review is an appropriate piece of our check-and-balance form of government, there's much to be gained and little to be lost by moving judicial review to the front end of the process.

(Joe Baessler is a Political Coordinator for Oregon AFSCME Council 75.)

Klare's column will be missed

To The Editor:

Subscribers to the Northwest Labor Press will sincerely miss its icon, Gene Klare's column "Let Me Say This About That."

Gene has played a major role in reporting and commenting on the unions and its members in this area both as a columnist and as editor of the newspaper.

In all the jobs he has worked in, he has shown outstanding talents. His last column outlined many of his accomplishments — from the infamous Oregonian strike and helping to start the labor-supported Reporter newspaper.

Let me assure you that's only the tip of the story. He's done so much more.

We will miss his column very much.

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More retirees sought to build Alliance For Retired Americans

To the Editor:

Everyone says 2008 will be a landmark year for America. After eight years under a regime that has decimated the middle class, violated the Constitution, and reversed much of the social and political progress of the last 70 years, people are starting to remember the issues they used to care about. Labor needs to capitalize on this reawakening. This could be the year.

You may have heard that the Alliance for Retired Americans was formed with this in mind, but do you understand why? It's not hard to explain. It's the doing that's been difficult.

The problem stems from the numbers. Historically, large numbers of union retirees are never heard from back at the hall or lodge once they no longer work for an income. But there were always the members born between 1946 and 1966. That's no longer the case. Large numbers of Baby Boomers are beginning to retire everywhere in America, including in the labor community. That spells trouble.

The notion of "Big Labor" has always been a myth. Union membership has been in decline for more than three decades, but the damage done to labor's power since Ronald Reagan crushed the air traffic controllers union

in 1981 has put us on life support. Labor needs retirees to organize themselves across turf lines; join in working coalitions with people holding similar political views; make their collective voice heard by municipal, county, state, and federal elected officials, and show the newer generations of union members why the wages and benefits are as good as they are.

Right now, only the Alliance for Retired Americans, with three dozen states on board and more to come, is taking on that task. That's why I'm urging ALL unions in Oregon to send one of their soon-to-retire members to our Western Regional Conference in Las Vegas March 24-26. Retirees and older working people (blue-collar, white-collar, and no-collar) from 12 Western states — including such left-wing labor bastions as New Mexico, Montana, and Colorado — will be learning from and teaching each other what retirement security is all about and what we all must do to protect it.

Please contact me at vvjporter@aol.com or 503-284-8591 if you want to hear more. It's crucial. We must join together. America may never be the same if we don't.

Verna Porter
President
Alliance for Retired Americans
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Task force favors I-5 Bridge replacement

By **DON McINTOSH**
Associate Editor

VANCOUVER — Replacing the I-5 Interstate Bridge — and extending the TriMet light rail line to Vancouver — are now the clear choice of a 39-member task force that has been studying how to relieve the Interstate Bridge traffic bottleneck.

Columbia River Crossing, as the task force is known, was formed to make a recommendation to the Washington and Oregon transportation departments. The Columbia-Pacific Building and Construction Trades Council has a voice on the task force in the person of Laborers Local 320 Business Manager Dave Tischer.

At its Jan. 22 meeting, Columbia River Crossing took a kind of straw poll.

“I think it’s high time we move forward with this,” Tischer told fellow task force members, declaring the building trades’ preference for light rail and a replacement bridge.

Not one task force member spoke in favor of other options that were being considered. Those options included: doing nothing at all; keeping the existing pair of bridges for northbound traffic and adding a supplemental bridge to carry southbound traffic; and adding bus-only lanes instead of light rail.

Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski and Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire had announced their preference for the replacement bridge option in a press statement the week before.

At the Jan. 22 meeting, task force members heard reports from Columbia River Crossing staff about the project’s environmental impacts, and about a proposal for tolling to help pay for the project, which also includes work on six nearby highway interchanges.

As laid out by staff, the toll would be collected electronically. Bridge users would get a transponder to place on their windshield, which would be read by roadside radio equipment; the toll would then be debited from the user’s account. Vehicles without a transponder would have their license plates photographed and would be charged a surcharge, getting a bill in the mail.

The toll would vary by time of day: For passenger cars, it would start at \$2.56 each way during morning and evening peak travel times (6 to 10 a.m. and 3 to 7 p.m.); \$1.92 between peaks and an hour before and after; and \$1.28 from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. Those figures are in 2017 dollars and are a very rough estimate based on estimated construction costs and the assumption that tolling would pay about one-third of the cost of the overall project, including the work on the interchanges. The bridge itself accounts for about a third of the estimated \$3.1 to \$4.2 billion cost of the overall project.

For peak hour commuters crossing five days a week, tolls would add up to about \$110 a month for starters. The toll

would rise with inflation and could continue for 30 to 40 years.

The task force also heard about 45 minutes of public testimony. Several union members were among those testifying, including former IBEW Local 48 business manager Ed Barnes, who served on a precursor task force. Barnes warned that if only the new I-5 bridge charges a toll, traffic — and congestion — will shift to the I-205 bridge. Barnes proposed putting tolls on both spans to head off that problem.

The next step in the process is the late February release of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement required by federal law. The statement will be about 3,000 pages long, and the public will have 60 days to comment on it by mail or email, or in person at hearings to be scheduled in Portland and Vancouver. Thus far, it looks like the project would have no major negative environmental impact, and may have a positive impact in some ways, by reducing emissions associated with the idling engines of vehicles stuck in traffic.

But that hasn’t satisfied some environmental activists and others, both on and off the task force, who have questioned the wisdom and expense of building a 12-lane bridge as the petroleum age enters its twilight.

“We should build it for the world we think we’re going to be living in,” testified Joe Cortright, a former economist for the State of Oregon.

“It sets a bad precedent that a project of this size ignores climate change,” said task force member Jill Fuglister, who is co-director of the Coalition for a Livable Future.

Some argued that the additional lanes will only encourage people to drive, and thus will fill up after the bridge is open. On the other hand, state transportation planners point to the bridge’s light rail component and the likelihood of tolling as likely to reduce congestion.

Also controversial among commenters was the question of where to put the light rail tracks on the Vancouver side. Some favor Main Street as the location most likely to increase ridership, and predict it will stimulate transit-oriented development as it has in Portland. But some small business owners voiced fears about the disruption, and favor an alignment next to I-5.

About 120 people attended the Jan. 22 meeting; about half of those testifying were critical, but most attendees seemed to support the bridge.

No local elected leaders are standing in the way of the bridge, but seeing some citizen opposition, building trades union leaders have been encouraging members — particularly members who use the I-5 Interstate Bridge — to come to meetings and testify in favor of building a new one. A schedule of upcoming community meetings is available at the task force web site, www.columbiarivercrossing.org.



‘A Job Well Done’

VANCOUVER — Ed Barnes, a retired business manager and 35-year member of Electrical Workers Local 48, was honored at a reception Jan. 23 for his service on the Washington State Transportation Commission.

More than 75 people attended, including Vancouver Mayor Royce Pollard and various politicians and union officials. Several speakers praised Barnes as “a champion of transportation in the state of Washington.” Letters of commendation “for a job well done” were read from U.S. Senators Patti Murray and Marie Cantwell, U.S. Rep. Brian Baird and Gov. Chris Gregoire.

Barnes served three terms (12 years is the limit) on the commission under appointments from three governors. “I’m proud to have served,” he said. “But I’ll tell you, it made me most proud when I got a unanimous confirmation from the Senate.”

Barnes has been a stalwart on transportation issues in both Washington and Oregon — be it roads, bridges, freight trains, ferry boats, buses, you name it.

“Ed Barnes has been a real important figure for transportation in this state,” said Transportation Commission Chair Christopher Ford, who later presented Barnes with a wall clock and resolution of commendation.

Washington State Transportation Secretary Paula Hammond said Barnes not only offered great leadership and advice to her; he was a cheerleader for DOT employees. “He would always thank the workers and tell them what a great job they were doing,” she said.

Port of Vancouver Commissioner Nancy Baker (photo right) also presented Barnes with a framed resolution on behalf of the Port for his work.

To cap off the evening, the Columbia River Sweet Adelines Chorus (above) serenaded Barnes with a medley of songs. Luanne Barnes, Ed’s wife, is a member of the chorus.

Term limits require Ed Barnes to step down from Washington State Transportation Commission



LERC 30th anniversary party March 7

The Labor Education and Research Center of the University of Oregon is planning a 30th anniversary celebration Friday, March 7, at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland. (The NW Labor Press incorrectly reported the date as March 30 in the Jan. 19 issue.)

Gov. Ted Kulongoski has been invited to speak, along with UO President Dave Frohnmayer and Ruth Milkman, director of the UCLA Institute for Research on Labor and Employment.

A reception and dinner are scheduled for 6 to 9 p.m. Preceding the dinner from 2 to 5 p.m. will be a symposium entitled, “Creating La-

bor-Community Alliances That Work.”

The Oregon Legislature established LERC in 1977 as a way to provide education and research to workers. At the UO campus in Eugene and at the Portland Center downtown, LERC offers classes and conducts research in the fields of occupational safety and health, technological changes, special concerns for women and minority workers, and a range of issues linked to collective bargaining and labor-management relations.

At the March 7 anniversary, LERC will launch its new Strategic Training and Action Research

(STAR) Fund. Net proceeds from the event will benefit the fund, which will be used in part to provide more training programs and to bring visiting union leaders to Oregon.

Donations to the STAR Fund are tax deductible and range from \$100 to \$5,000. A \$5,000 “Visionary” contribution includes 16 anniversary dinner tickets and recognition in the dinner program. A \$100 “Activist” contribution includes a dinner ticket and recognition in the dinner program. Individual dinner tickets are \$60 each.

For more information about the anniversary dinner and/or the STAR Fund, call LERC at 541-346-5054.