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MEETING NOTICES

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NORTHWEST

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A LOOK BACK AT LABOR STORIES IN 2009

New Year's Day at the Northwest Labor Press is a chance to look back on — and update — some of the stories we reported in 2009.

2009 was a difficult year, with unemployment topping 12 percent in Oregon, union pension funds cutting back extras, and local union workers agreeing to wage freezes or concessions in contract votes. Among local public sector unions, wage freezes began with 164 Vancouver firefighters two days before 2009 began, and continued with 230 City of Vancouver workers in four other unions. In March, 2,700 Multnomah County workers agreed to a wage freeze in order to minimize layoffs. And in July, the two largest state public employee unions in Oregon agreed to pay freezes and unpaid furlough days in new two-year contracts covering 21,500 workers. A new five-year contract approved in July for 700 workers at Northwest Natural Gas also had provisions for furloughs, though it contained annual raises of 1 to 3 percent. And in September, a contract covering up to 6,000 members of the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters included a \$4.86 an hour wage cut on smaller privately funded construction projects, to shore up union contractors facing fierce competition in a major construction downturn.

At the Freightliner truck factory in Portland, it was a roller coaster year. Parent company Daimler announced in January that it would close the plant in June 2010 when the Machinists

union contract expires, but rescinded that plan in September.

In February, the Teamsters offered an unconditional return to work at Oak Harbor Freight Lines, where about 600 Teamster drivers and warehouse workers had been on strike since September 2008. But the company refused to return 13 workers it accused of picket line misconduct. Two other Oak Harbor union supporters were fired after the return to work. A wave of decertification attempts at different Oak Harbor locations was dismissed by the National Labor Relations Board in March, but since then the dispute has continued in a kind of legal limbo: The employer technically recognizes the union, but workers have been without a union contract since October 2007. Union-filed unfair labor practice charges continue to work their way through the NLRB's bureaucratic processes.

In March, perennial union foe Bill Sizemore was banned from any role in a tax-deductible non-profit charity by a judge's order. Then in October, he faced a new racketeering lawsuit filed by two teachers unions, with Nevada millionaire Loren Parks as co-defendant. And revelations in a still-unfinished 10-year-old racketeering lawsuit led the State of Oregon to indict him and his wife in November for felony tax evasion.

The dream of a memorial to workers killed on the job was realized in April with the official unveiling of the Fallen Workers Memorial on the Capitol Mall in Salem.

In April, Laurelhurst Village nursing home in Southeast Port-

land fired pro-union worker Elizabeth Lehr, days after she got involved in a union campaign by Service Employees International Union Local 503. But in July the company paid an undisclosed amount to settle her unfair labor practice charge, and by November, parent company Farmington Centers had agreed to recognize the union as representative of its 144 workers.

In July, Iron Workers Local 516 and Oregon Iron Works gained national attention when they unveiled the first streetcar made in America since 1951. With a resurgence of streetcars in the United States, the Clackamas-based company has orders to build more streetcars for cities throughout the country.

Fred Meyer, one of the area's largest union employers, came under increasing criticism both from its own employees' union, (United Food & Commercial Workers Local 555), and local building trades unions angered at being shut out of a major chain-wide remodeling project. From summer onward, building trades leaders led demonstrations outside Fred Meyer stores, even as a Spokane UFCW local blanketed Portland with lawn signs and bus bench ads taking aim at the company for firing cashiers for first-offense cash handling mistakes. In October, a manager at a Fred Meyer store in Hillsboro called police, and three UFCW Local 555 representatives, including union President Dan Clay, were arrested for trespass. Their

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Labor helps to bring holiday cheer

Glenn Shuck (back left), executive director of Labor's Community Service Agency, partakes in the festivities at the "Presents for Partners" holiday party Dec. 19 at Genesis Community Fellowship in Northeast Portland. Labor unions, members, and allies donated nearly 1,100 toys to make this year's party possible. Each of the 323 children at the party received two new toys, a visit with Santa Claus, a stuffed animal, and a candy cane. "This exceeded all expectations," said Shuck. "I've never seen families respond the way they did. They were overwhelmed with joy." This is the 13th year that Labor's Community Service Agency and the Northwest Oregon Labor Council have held the event. (Photo courtesy of Pat Philpott.)



Measures 66 & 67

Taxing the top tier

For the first time in a generation, Oregon voters will decide whether corporations and the rich should pay more

By DON McINTOSH
Associate Editor

On Jan. 26, Oregon voters will decide a question of tax fairness: Should large and profitable corporations and very-high-income individuals pay a higher share of state taxes?

The Oregon Legislature answered yes to this question in June 2009, but business groups spent \$960,000 on a signature-gathering effort to put the tax increases before voters. In the depths of a severe recession, they seek to repeal very modest and mostly temporary increases in the income taxes paid by corporations and high-income individuals.

Measure 66 raises tax rates on the top 3 percent of income tax payers — and

lowers taxes on 15 percent of income tax payers — those who collected unemployment benefits in 2009. Measure 67 raises the corporate minimum tax, and increases the tax rate corporations pay on their declared profits.

The tax increases are forecasted to raise \$730 million in two years, helping fill a recession-caused hole in the state's General Fund. Because the money is already budgeted, for voters to reject either measure would force significant cuts in education, public safety, and social services.

"This is a very clear vote," says Chuck Sheketoff, executive director of Oregon Center for Public Policy, a non-profit group that researches tax and budget issues. "The only way to turn that around," Sheketoff said, "is to scare people or mislead them."

And that's exactly what the business-backed group Oregonians Against Job-Killing Taxes is doing, says Scott Moore, spokesperson for Vote Yes for

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...Foes of Ballot Measures 66 and 67 using scare tactics

(From Page 1)

Oregon, the labor and community coalition that is defending the increases. Since Sept. 25, when Oregonians Against Job-Killing Taxes turned in signatures, the group has spent another \$1 million on a direct mail and media campaign arguing that the tax increases target small businesses, and will lead to major job losses.

Both claims are demonstrably false. To understand why, you have to know more about the measures.

Measure 66 raises income tax rates on taxable income above \$250,000 for joint filers (\$125,000 for single filers). Taxable income is the income after you take deductions. All taxable income above \$15,200 a year for joint filers and \$7,600 for single filers is currently taxed by the State of Oregon at 9 percent. Measure 66 would temporarily hike that to 10.8 percent on taxable income between \$250,000 and \$500,000 a year for

joint filers (half that for single filers); and to 11 percent on taxable income above that. Starting in 2012, those rates would drop to 9.9 percent on all income above \$250,000 for joint filers (\$125,000 for single filers.) The measure also eliminates income tax on the first \$2,400 of unemployment insurance benefits received in 2009.

Opponents of Measures 66 and 67 point out that with most small businesses, profits are taxed as personal income. But that also means all business expenses are deducted from income, for tax purposes. So let's say a mom-and-pop business has \$1 million in annual revenue, but \$800,000 in expenses — rent, supplies, payroll, a car used for business purposes, equipment that depreciates in value. Assuming no other income, they clear \$200,000, and don't pay a penny extra under Measure 66.

On the other hand, a small business owner who netted \$300,000 — that's

\$25,000 a month — would pay an extra \$900 a year in taxes for two years, and then \$450 a year after that.

"Somebody who is making \$300,000, in this economy, is doing pretty well, and asking them to pay a little bit more to protect critical services makes sense," says Speaker Dave Hunt (D-Clackamas), who led passage of the tax measures in the Oregon House of Representatives. Hunt says lawmakers rejected calls from the business community for an across-the-board income tax increase, and instead crafted both measures specifically to avoid burdening small businesses or working people.

Measure 67 applies to the corporate income tax. Since 1931, corporations whose books don't show taxable income have paid a corporate minimum income tax of \$10 a year. Measure 67 raises that to \$150 a year, except for corporations with more than \$500,000 in Oregon sales, which would pay about 0.1 percent of their revenue. Corporations with over \$100 million in Oregon revenue would pay \$100,000.

Opponents say it's unfair to raise the minimum, because corporations only pay it when they're not profitable. That's not accurate, Sheketoff points out. They pay it when their books show no taxable income from Oregon activities. Many things can reduce taxable income, including losses in previous years, which can be rolled forward.

"This is why they have accountants," said Moore, the Vote Yes spokesperson. "Their accountants are employed to make sure they get out of paying taxes." The accountants earn their keep. The

corporate minimum is all the income tax paid by two-thirds of the corporations doing business in Oregon. In fact, according to the Oregon Department of Revenue, 104 companies that have over \$100 million a year in Oregon sales have been paying \$10 a year in taxes. And 77 of those are headquartered out of state.

Measure 67 also raises the tax rate on corporations that do report taxable income. Those profits are currently taxed at 6.6 percent in Oregon. Measure 67 raises that to 7.9 percent on corporate profits over \$250,000 — in 2009 and 2010; lowers it to 7.6 percent in 2011 and 2012; and returns it to 6.6 percent after 2012, for all corporate profits below \$10 million. Above \$10 million, profit would be taxed at 7.6 percent, with all revenue generated by that extra 1 percent above the current rate dedicated to the state rainy day fund.

Now you know the basics of the two measures.

Sheketoff has been playing a merry game of whack-a-mole debunking examples of small business owners who would supposedly be hurt by the measure. The Eastern Oregon rancher who told a newspaper he was all set to move to Idaho learned from Sheketoff that in fact he'd pay just \$150 a year extra under the measure. The Ethiopian restaurant owner pictured in an Associated Oregon Industries newsletter as some-

one who would "feel the pinch" turned out to be pinched only \$150, and he told Sheketoff he's proud to pay taxes, and angry his picture had been used without his knowledge.


Then there's Tillamook dairy farmer Carol Marie Leuthold. You may remember getting a letter from her in late November. Hand-signed, it was mailed out to 960,000 Oregon registered voters. In it, she said she was worried that Measures 66 and 67 would hurt her farm and the families it supports. Leuthold admitted to the Oregonian that her farm operation would pay just \$150 extra under Measure 67, but said Measure 66's personal income tax increase would affect her, because she had income from activities unrelated to the farm. In other words, she's not the struggling farmer the letter portrays: Her household's taxable income of over a quarter million dollars puts her in the top 3 percent of Oregonians.

"The claim that small businesses are going to pay this is not grounded in reality," Sheketoff said.

You don't have to be Sheketoff to play bunk-busters. Anyone familiar with the measures can do it with opposing arguments in the Voters' Pamphlet that was mailed out this week.

Associated General Contractors (AGC) Oregon-Columbia Chapter,


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...97% of taxpayers not impacted by measures

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whose members frequently employ union building trades workers, wrote in the Voter Pamphlet that 86 percent of its 1,100 members are small family-run businesses with 10 or fewer employees, and virtually all are suffering losses in the recession. But then it says that Measures 66 and 67 require its members to pay up to \$100,000 even when they are losing money. The taxes "will leave many of our members little choice but to curtail benefits, consider additional layoffs, or sadly, close down entirely."

It doesn't add up. Under the measures, if a small business is losing money, it won't have profits to tax as personal income, and its minimum tax will be \$150. The \$100,000 tax bill AGC mentions is on companies with over \$100 million a year in Oregon sales. Those are not small, family-run businesses.

John Mohlis, executive secretary-treasurer of the Columbia Pacific Building and Construction Trades Council, is skeptical that the tax increase would lead to job cuts. "Whether there are jobs has to do with the volume of work, not the size of the tax bill," Mohlis said.

"Right now, there's just not much construction work."

Oregonians Against Job-Killing Taxes continues to repeat its argument that the tax increases will hurt small business and ordinary people, but their real impact is on large corporations and wealthy individuals like the ones funding Oregonians Against Job-Killing Taxes. Of the close to a million dollars raised during the campaign's signature gathering phase, contributions of less than \$100 totaled less than \$1,500. The donors list is almost entirely business groups, big corporations, and millionaires. The Oregon Bankers Association gave \$100,000. Associated Oregon Industries gave \$125,300. AGC gave \$38,497. Weyerhaeuser gave \$51,194. Plaid Pantry chipped in \$10,000. Loren Parks, long-time funder to union foe Bill Sizemore, gave \$75,000. Timothy Boyle, who made \$800,000 as CEO of Columbia Sportswear in 2008 (and \$1.7 million the year before), gave \$10,000. Nike founder Phil Knight, whose personal net worth is estimated to be \$8.2 billion, gave \$50,000.

It wouldn't serve their cause to put Knight on a flier complaining about the 2 percent more he would pay on earnings from the \$150 million in Nike stock he reportedly sold in October. So Oregonians Against Job-Killing Taxes makes "jobs" the heart of its campaign. They claim "economists" say the measures will cause 70,000 jobs to be lost — a figure repeated in 28 separate statements in the Voters' Pamphlet.

[See the adjacent article "Lying by Numbers" for how they came up with the number.]

"Their job loss claim," Sheketoff said, "isn't worth the paper it's printed on."

But Speaker Hunt says they're ignoring the real, countable jobs the measures create in the public sector, by funding teachers, in-home caregivers, and construction workers on state projects. About 51 percent of the revenues raised go to schools (K-12, community college, and state universities); 27 percent pays for services, including health insurance for children, seniors, and the disabled, with matching federal dollars; 18 percent pays for public safety (prisons, jails, and courts); and 4 percent funds other programs, including business regulation.

To defend the measures, Vote Yes for Oregon has assembled a broad coalition. They are raising money and turning out volunteers to get facts out to voters.

"We're letting people know if your family doesn't make \$250,000 a year, you're not going to see a tax increase," said Elana Guiney, spokesperson for the Oregon AFL-CIO. "Right now, two-thirds of corporations pay \$10 a year in taxes, while the average family pays \$3,100 a year. When people find out what's really going on, most say they'll vote yes."

On Sunday, Jan. 3, union members will meet for a canvass. Call 503-224-3169 for details.

Ballots go out Jan. 8. A "yes" vote is a vote for the tax increases.

Lying by numbers

Oregonians Against Job-Killing Taxes claims that "economists" say Measures 66 and 67 will cause the loss of 70,000 jobs — a figure repeated in 28 separate statements in the Voters' Pamphlet.

The economists referred to are Bill Conerly and Randall Pozdena, who conducted their analyses for the Cascade Policy Institute, the same group that a few years ago was calling for putting Social Security funds in the stock market. Conerly is chairman of the group's board of directors, and Pozdena is its "academic adviser."

Reached by phone, Cascade Policy Institute Executive Director Steve Buckstein confirmed how Conerly and Pozdena came up with their analyses. See if you can follow.

To assess the impact of Measure 66's tax increase on very-high-income individuals, Conerly re-used an economic model he developed four years earlier to argue for a capital gains tax reduction. Based on that previous study of tax and economic data from 50 states over 26 (or 27) years, Conerly concluded that for every percentage decrease in the capital gains tax rate, the rate of economic growth would increase by 0.091 percent. Reasoning that there's no difference between capital gains taxes and income taxes on high-income individuals, he then turned that equation upside down to say that for every percent of income tax increase on high-income individuals, the economic growth rate would go down by the same factor. He then applied that factor to an old State of Oregon economic forecast to conclude that for every year that passed, more and more jobs would not be created by these rich individuals. In the first year, Conerly said, the impact would be small — 5,570 jobs — but by 2015, the impact would total 36,000 jobs.

Pozdena did a similar thing for Measure 67's corporate tax increase, only he used as his basis a study of capital movements between different nations that belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Pozdena concluded that the 1 to 2 percent increase in the corporate income tax rate would cause the state's growth rate to decrease 0.1 to 0.2 percent. Then, he applied that to a state economic forecast from before the late 2008 economic meltdown to come up with a figure of 22,000 and 43,000 jobs that would not be created by corporations and rich individuals — over the course of 10 years. The common sense explanation for this, Pozdena explained on Cascade's Web site, is that people would choose where to live and where to invest, and would invest less in Oregon.

Add the two, and you get 58,000 to 79,000 jobs not created by the private sector over five years ... or 10 years. Buckstein explained that he took the top figure in that range, 79,000, and tweaked it downward to make it a number of "full-time equivalent" jobs, and that's how the 70,000 jobs figure was born.

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Official Notices

BAKERY, CONFECTIONERY, TOBACCO WORKERS AND GRAIN MILLERS 114

Executive Board meets 10 a.m. Tuesday, Jan. 26, in the meeting room at 7931 NE Halsey, Suite 102, Portland.

BOILERMAKERS 500

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

BRICKLAYERS AND ALLIED CRAFTWORKERS 1

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

CEMENT MASONS 555

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

CENTRAL OREGON LABOR COUNCIL

Delegates meet 5:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 25, at UA 290 Training Center, 2161 SE 1st St., Redmond.

CLARK, SKAMANIA & W. KLICKITAT COUNTIES LABOR COUNCIL

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

ELECTRICAL WORKERS 48

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

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

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

Residential Unit meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 13, in the Dispatch Lobby.

Vancouver Meeting, 6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 13, at Round Table Pizza, 5016 NE Thurston, Vancouver.

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

Wasco Unit meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 13, at Bingen Meeting Rm., Pioneer Center, 971 NE Washington St., White Salmon, WA.

Electrical Women of Local 48 meets 5:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 15, at 5th Quadrant, 3901b N. Williams, Portland.

Bylaws Committee meets 5:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 18, in the Executive Boardroom.

Marine Unit meets 5 p.m. Monday, Jan. 25, in the Meeting Hall.

General Membership Meeting meets 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 27, in the Meeting Hall. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. for sandwiches.

DEATH ASSESSMENT: Effective 1/1/10, the Death Assessments are \$1.50 per month per Active member. The following deaths were reported: James Ziegler; William C. Lucht.

ELECTRICAL WORKERS 280

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

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

Eugene Unit meets 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 20, at the LU 290 Training Center, 2861 Pierce Parkway, Springfield.

Salem Unit meets 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 21, at Salem Heights, Liberty & Madrona, Salem.

ELEVATOR CONSTRUCTORS 23

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

FIRE FIGHTERS 452

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

FIRE FIGHTERS 1660

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

GLASS WORKERS 740

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

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

Eugene area members meet 5 p.m. Monday, Jan. 11, at 1174 Gateway Loop, Springfield.

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

INSULATORS 36

Executive Board meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 6.

Members meet 8 p.m. Friday, Jan. 8.

Meetings are at 11145 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

IRON WORKERS 29

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

LABOR ROUNDTABLE OF SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

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

LABORERS 483

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

LABORERS/VANCOUVER 335

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

LABORERS 320

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

LANE COUNTY LABOR COUNCIL

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

LANE, COOS, CURRY & DOUGLAS BUILDING TRADES

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

LINN-BENTON-LINCOLN LABOR COUNCIL

Delegates meet 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 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, Jan. 4, at 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

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

MARION-POLK-YAMHILL LABOR COUNCIL

Delegates meet 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 12, preceded by a 6:30 Executive Board meeting, at 2110 State St., Salem.

METAL TRADES COUNCIL

Executive Board meets 10 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 14.

Delegates meet 5 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 26.

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

MID-COLUMBIA LABOR COUNCIL

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

MILLWRIGHTS & MACHINERY ERECTORS 711

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

MOLDERS 139

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

MULTNOMAH COUNTY EMPLOYEES 88

Executive Board meets 6:15 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 6.

General membership meets 7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 20, preceded by a 6 p.m. stewards' meeting.

Meetings are at 6025 E. Burnside, Portland.

NORTHWEST OREGON LABOR COUNCIL

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

PAINTERS & DRYWALL FINISHERS 10

Members meet 6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 20, at 11105 NE Sandy Blvd. 2nd Floor, Portland. Each member may have a chance to win payment of dues by attending the meeting each month. Omar Rios would have had his dues paid for 4 months if he had been at the Nov. meeting.

PLASTERERS 82

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

ROOFERS & WATERPROOFERS 49

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

Members meet 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 14.

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

SALEM BUILDING TRADES

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

SHEET METAL WORKERS 16

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

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

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

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

Coos Bay area members meet 5 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 21, at Abby's Pizza, 997 First St., Coos Bay.

SIGN PAINTERS & PAINT MAKERS 1094

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

SOUTHERN OREGON

CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

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

SOUTHWESTERN OREGON CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

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

UNITED ASSOCIATION 290

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

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

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

Brookings area members meet 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 26, at Curry County Search and Rescue, 517 Railroad St., Brookings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

UNITED STEELWORKERS 1097

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

Electrical Workers Minority Caucus to meet in Portland

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 48 will host the Electrical Workers Minority Caucus Convention Jan. 14-17 at the Benson Hotel.

The conference theme is The Green Economy.

The primary mission of the caucus is to promote equal opportunity and employment for minorities at all levels of the IBEW, said Local 48 member and Electrical Workers Minority Caucus Portland chapter President Donna Hammond.

The caucus has been meeting for the past 20 years prior to the MLK Jr. holiday. For that reason, in addition to workshops, panel discussions, a banquet, and the awarding of scholarships, the conference also includes a day of community service.

For more information, go online to www.ibew-ewmc.com or ewmc@ibew48.com.

Retiree Meeting Notices

ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED AMERICANS OREGON CHAPTER

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

Retirees meet 10 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 28, at SEIU Hall, 6401 SE Foster, Portland.

CARPENTERS

Retired Carpenters meet for lunch 11 a.m. Monday, Jan. 11, at Izzy's Pizza, 1307 NE 102nd Ave., Portland.

ELECTRICAL WORKERS 48

Retirees, wives and friends meet for lunch at 1 to 1:15 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 12, at Elmer's Restaurant, NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

ELECTRICAL WORKERS 280

Retirees meet between 11:45 a.m. and noon Monday, Jan. 11, at Home-town Buffet on Lancaster in Salem. If you have any questions, please give Don Ball a call at 541-327-3388.

ELEVATOR CONSTRUCTORS 23

Retirees meet 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, Jan. 12 for hosted lunch at Kirkland Union Manor.

INSULATORS 36

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

IRON WORKERS 29

Retirees meet noon Wednesday, Jan. 13, at the Eagle Lodge, 4904 SE Hawthorne, Portland.

MILLWRIGHTS 711

Retirees meet noon Wednesday, Jan. 20, at Hometown Buffet, 10542A SE Washington St., Portland.

NORTHWEST OREGON LABOR RETIREES COUNCIL

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

OREGON AFSCME

Retirees meet 10 a.m. Tuesday, Jan. 19, 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, Jan. 14, at The Spaghetti Factory, 18925 NW Tanasbourne, Hillsboro.

TRANSIT 757

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

UNITED ASSOCIATION 290

Rusty Pipe retirees meet 2 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 7, at the Springfield Training Center, 2861 Pierce Parkway. Salem area retirees meet 12 noon Wednesday, Jan. 13, at Almost Home Restaurant, 3310 Market St. SE.

Retirees meet 10 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 21, at 20210 SW Teton Ave., Tualatin.



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Workers and unions in Colombia oppose free trade agreement now pending in U.S. Congress

By DENNY SCOTT

A delegation of seven U.S. citizens traveled to Colombia, South America, the first week of November under the sponsorship of Witness for Peace to investigate worker rights abuses and the position of Colombian worker groups on the Colombia-U. S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Four union members in the delegation were from Oregon and Washington — Mike Pieti, executive secretary of the Carpenters Industrial Council, John Walsh, Local 767M Graphic Communications/Teamsters, Kari Ball, Service Employees International Union, and myself.

The delegation quickly learned that large segments of Colombian society oppose the Colombian-U.S. FTA. The view heard over and over was that the FTA, if approved by the U.S. Congress, would further consolidate the power of the transnational corporations operating in Colombia and cause even more repression of worker rights, and more dislocation, higher unemployment, and higher rates of poverty.

The mayor's office in Cali, Colombia's third largest city, opposes the FTA. The government of Colombian President Alvaro Uribe is closely tied to the global corporate interests that have rushed to Colombia to take advantage of its vast array of natural resources — oil, minerals, gold, coal, emeralds, bananas, sugar, coffee, water, and fertile soils.

The delegation came to the conclusion that there is a concerted, systematic and brutal plan in place to repress workers and to push wages to the lowest sub-poverty levels possible. The government, for example, enacted a bill in 1990 which allows companies to establish worker "cooperatives." It is a "co-op" in name only. The Colombian ver-



Oregon delegation member John Walsh (center) has lunch with dock workers in Buenaventura, Colombia. Walsh is a member of GCIU Local 767M.

sion of "co-op" means that every worker is an "owner-operator" who must pay his or her own social security payments to the government to qualify for a pension. Colombian co-ops are designed to allow corporations to undermine and destroy worker organizations.

The delegation, for example, met with dock workers in Buenaventura, one of Colombia's major ports on the Pacific Ocean. The port is being transformed into a mega-port that will allow transnational corporations to send vast quantities of raw materials to destinations around the globe.

The port was privatized in 1993 and, with that came a new set of rules under the "co-op." When the port was owned by the government, about 8,000 workers were hired directly by the port authority. Now, workers are considered "owner-operators" under the co-op system. Wage rates have remained the same for 16 years, and the normal

workday is 12 to 14 hours, but workers are usually paid for only eight hours.

The delegation was informed that the hourly rate of pay is officially about \$1, but dock workers rarely achieve that level because of the unpaid hours worked. A complaint only means that a

worker won't be called for work the next day by the co-op.

It's much like the brutal "shape-up" system longshoremen in this country overcame in the 1930s when the docks were unionized.

The dock workers in Buenaventura said that there have been 45 deaths on the docks since privatization, and very little has been done to prevent future deaths and injuries. Widows are left with no life insurance and are forced into begging and destitute poverty. Dock workers loading dusty coal are given one dust mask a month that is useless after for four or five days of use.

Another complaint heard repeatedly was that large plants are being closed and the companies have no responsibility to assist impacted workers or their families. There are no unemployment benefits available. These companies are, in fact, reopening plants in the tax-free zones to cut costs even further and workers in tax-free zones are prohibited from joining a union. This movement is expected to accelerate if the free trade agreement is approved.

Finally, leaders who have the courage to speak out against abuses run the risk of being assassinated or disap-

pearing at the hands of paramilitary groups. More trade unionists are killed in Colombia than in the rest of the world combined. Many workers the delegation interviewed had been threatened, and all of them knew of fellow workers who had been killed.

It is common, they said, for a company to label a worker leader as a "guerrilla" and that is the signal for the paramilitary to assassinate that person. This is verified by confessions that came out in the amnesty program put in place in an effort to disarm the guerilla groups and paramilitary groups. In exchange for reduced sentences, members of paramilitary groups testified that they were given names and photos of union leaders to be eliminated, and then given full access to the company property.

The systematic program put in place to crush worker rights, and the deliberate assassination of union leaders are strong and compelling reasons for the U.S. Congress to reject the Colombia-U. S. Free Trade Agreement.

(Editor's Note: Denny Scott is a retired Carpenters Industrial Council union official.)

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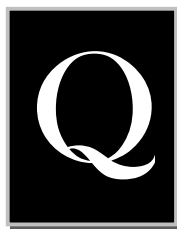
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Chamber, Associated Oregon Industries, file lawsuit to stop Worker Freedom Act

Associated Oregon Industries (AOI) and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce filed a lawsuit Dec. 22 to stop the Worker Freedom Act from becoming law. Senate Bill 519 — the Worker Freedom Act — was labor's top priority bill at the Oregon Legislature last session. The new law prevents employers from punishing workers who opt-out of mandatory meetings on topics such as politics, religion, and union organizing.

Oregon is the first state to pass such a law. It was to take affect Jan. 1.

The lawsuit specifies Laborers Local 296 and Oregon Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian as defendants. AOI and

the U.S. Chamber claim SB 519 violates federal law and the First Amendment.

The lawsuit appears to revolve around Local 296's union organizing campaign at cooked meat producer BrucePac. In June, BrucePac fired at least 17 union supporters, just weeks into the campaign among 350 workers at the company's Woodburn and Silverton plants. Local 296 protested the firings in legal charges filed with the National Labor Relations Board, and the agency found merit to some of them. That case will go before a federal administrative law judge Jan. 12.

The lawsuit describes the BrucePac

campaign, without specifically naming the company.

Tom Chamberlain, president of the Oregon AFL-CIO, says the lawsuit is without merit. "(SB 519) addresses separate issues from the laws they refer to, and specifically protects both an employer's right to free speech and a worker's right to be free from unwanted communication."

Chamberlain said some employers "seem to be threatened by the idea that they will no longer be able to fire or punish workers who don't want to sit down and listen to their opinions on non-work-related topics."

Seattle to host large MLK event

One of the largest Martin Luther King Jr. celebrations in the nation will take place in Seattle Monday, Jan. 18.

Entitled "Justice Now! Health care, Housing, Jobs & Education," the day-long event will feature workshops, entertainment, and a rally and march through the streets of Seattle.

Workshops start at 9:30 a.m. at Garfield High School, 400 23rd Ave at East Jefferson. At 11 a.m., a rally with speakers, poetry, and music will be held. Then, at noon, participants will march to the Jackson Federal Building,

2nd & Marion, downtown for a brief outdoor rally.

"This year, MLK Day occurs during a time of hardship with unemployment rates not seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s," said Jean Buskin of the MLK Jr. Celebration Committee. "The urgent needs of our communities inspired this year's theme."

The celebration is open to all and is free. A collection will be taken to help cover costs.

Buskin said Seattle holds one of the largest annual Martin Luther King Day celebrations in the U.S.

you that rare sense of nobility that can only spring from love and selflessly helping your fellow man. Make a career of humanity. Commit yourself to the noble struggle for human rights. You will make a greater person of yourself, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in."

APRIL 18, 1959

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AFL-CIO urges 'yes' vote on Measures 66 & 67

Open Forum

...Top labor stories of '09

(From Page 1)

court date is in January. In December, Fred Meyer was declared the local private sector "Grinch of the Year," by Portland Jobs With Justice. Look for the dispute to continue into 2010 as Local 555 continues to bargain successor agreements to the ones that expired in July 2008 for 5,300 workers, and as building trades-affiliated health trusts close down deals with Kroger pharmacy.

Politically, the high point for labor was the inauguration of Democratic President Barack Obama in January. Top labor leaders were suddenly frequent White House guests after eight years of near-total isolation from the nation's chief executive. Also sworn in was labor ally Jeff Merkley, who replaced Republican Gordon Smith as Oregon's junior U.S. Senator. In February, the Democratic-majority Congress passed economic stimulus legislation that carried a \$787 billion price tag. But Congress was still wrangling over health care reform as the year ended, and had yet to deliver on labor's top priority — the Employee Free Choice Act — or complete work on other pressing issues like climate change and reform of the financial system.

In the State of Washington, top Democrats elected with labor's help caved to business pressure and refused to allow a vote on a workers' rights bill. Washington Governor Chris Gregoire, House Speaker Frank Chopp, and Senate President Lisa Brown even called state police to suggest that a leaked internal memo from the Washington State Labor Council crossed a legal line. The betrayal prompted changes in the way the state's labor movement will approach politics in years to come.

The Oregon Legislature met from January to June, and passed a bill that gives workers the right to refuse to attend workplace anti-union meetings. But on Dec. 22, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Associated Oregon Industries filed suit to stop the new law from taking effect Jan. 1.

Throughout 2009, construction unions were busy lobbying for a new Interstate 5 bridge between Portland and Vancouver that would include six through lanes and six merging lanes, light rail extensions, bike and pedestrian lanes, and interchange improvements. However, several politicians from both Portland and Vancouver have wavered on their support, so lobbying will continue in 2010.

By TOM CHAMBERLAIN

The economy is bad. States are going broke. Need is up. We've all heard the bad news.

But this January, in Oregon, we have the opportunity to create some good news.

For the first time in decades, legislators passed moderate tax increases that will help secure funding for things like education and public safety without hurting middle class Oregonians. In fact, their small increases will only affect 2.5 percent of Oregonians. But without your help these needed measures will be overturned by big corporations who are used to getting special treatment.

Oregon's corporate minimum tax is \$10. In fact, about two-thirds of businesses only pay \$10 a year in taxes — while they depend on the

rest of us to fund education so they have a qualified workforce to draw on, roads so they can ship their products, and other services they depend on every day.

Some wealthy Oregonians and large corporations are still raking in the cash while too many of our friends and neighbors struggle to make ends meet. Meanwhile, the Legislature made \$2 billion in cuts last year, drastically limiting many vital services and asking public employees to take a series of furlough days, and they are facing another \$733 million shortfall.

The solution is the tax package the Legislature passed last spring. But those taxes have been referred to the ballot, and now it's up to you, your friends, neighbors and family members, to vote yes on Measures 66 and 67 this month. Measures 66 and 67

raise the corporate minimum from \$10 to \$150. They ask profitable corporations, corporations with high Oregon sales, and families making over \$250,000 a year to pay a little bit more. If your family makes less than \$250,000 a year (or if you file as an individual and make less than \$125,000) your taxes won't change at all.

These measures are fair. They will preserve jobs, preserve funding for projects that create jobs, and preserve vital services like education, health care, and public safety that we all depend on.

It's time corporations and the very rich pay their fair share.

That's why the Oregon AFL-CIO endorsed Measures 66 and 67. That's why I'm joining labor leaders from across the state in voting "yes" on

Measures 66 and 67.

But I can't do it alone. We need you to look for your ballot later this month and make sure to return it by Tuesday, Jan. 26. And we need you to spread the word. Talk to your friends and family. Talk to your co-workers. Make sure they know why you're voting "yes" for Oregon this month.

If you need more information about the ballot measures, you can check the Oregon AFL-CIO Web site at www.oraficio.org, read more about it in the Oregon AFL-CIO Weekly Update, or go to the campaign Web site at www.voteyesfororegon.org.

Thanks for joining me in protecting the things that make Oregon special!

(Editor's Note: Tom Chamberlain is president of the Oregon AFL-CIO.)

Oregon deserves better than a jobless recovery

To The Editor:

Since the 1980s, a lack of a national forest plan is a major reason Oregon has had 200 timber mills close, causing 50,000 people to lose their jobs.

Rural Oregon has been economically ruined. Almost every rural town had a lumber mill. Now, most are gone.

Rural counties have been providing services for their citizens by using federal timber monies that in 2012 will cease. Oregon will have to keep these counties afloat.

We have lost thousands of aluminum jobs as plants closed. Over half of our paper and pulp mills have closed, costing thousands of jobs. Our major steel plants have closed, costing thousands of jobs. Heavy construction has lost thousands of jobs. Machine manufacturing plants have closed, costing thousands of jobs. Computer high-tech has lost thousands of jobs. Transportation manufacturing has lost thousands of jobs. Oregon has lost thousands of food processing jobs.

The sad part is: we are STILL LOSING JOBS. Roughly 120,000 since November 2007.

These lost jobs were the backbone of Oregon's industrial work sector. These workers were the primary state, county, and city taxpayers. Oregon has created over 70,000 public-sector jobs during this time period, further putting a strain on state budgets.

During the 1980 recession, almost all these industrial facilities and jobs were still in place, and when these workers returned from layoffs or curtailed hours and went back to work, Oregon had no problem pulling out of the recession.

Oregon's unemployed now number over 200,000 when you count the ones that have quit looking for work or who are working part time earning lower wages.

One out of six Oregonians is receiving food stamps. Oregon needs to put 150,000 people back to work earning decent wages now. We can't wait three

to four years, as some experts project for this jobless recovery.

None of these so-called experts have missed a paycheck yet. We have lost a large majority of these jobs to other states and trade agreements with foreign nations. This has to stop.

If we had a national forest plan we could put thousands back to work doing forest restoration, thinning and logging and perhaps even put a few small mills back on line in our rural areas, helping our rural counties become self-sufficient once again.

We need bridges. Let's build them.

We need dependable high-speed train service instead of pouring billions of dollars into Amtrak.

We need to ensure that we have highways to handle our traffic needs. We start these projects and the federal government will step in to help finance.

We need to build the ocean cargo container facility at Coos Bay, putting 2,000 people to work.

We need to follow the lead of Idaho

and Washington and insure we have additional irrigation water to create tens of thousands of additional farm acres in central and eastern Oregon growing food products for America and the world.

This would create thousands of jobs.

The first step to accomplish these goals is to take the ideas of the Oregon Business Council to put people back to work, form a task force of business and labor folks to put these and other ideas to work, and make sure our elected officials understand this needs to be done, and done now.

Again, Oregonians deserve better than a jobless recovery plan. The only recovery plan that will work is to put Oregonians back to work now.

Bill J. Kluting
Carpenters Industrial Council
Monmouth

U.S. Congress should require 'Sunshine Vote'

To The Editor:

Recently, Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., stated: "I can't count 60 votes in the Senate for a public option, so I'm going to vote 'no.'"

If we had a rule that required a "Sunshine Vote," he would have said: "I have to acknowledge the thousands of dollars I have received from the insurance, pharmaceutical, and drug companies and, therefore, I am voting 'no' on this public option."

I sure hope you all still believe in "government of the people, by the people, for the people."

John Theodore
AFSCME
Retired
Salem

The labor of our hands and the case for unions

To The Editor:

The history of organized labor is a story of the human spirit against the greedy nature of man. A nature that wants to oppress the weak and to enrich itself at the expense of another.

The extreme of this is slavery. Since the dawn of recorded history, slavery tells the dark side of human nature, and it still exists in parts of the world, but even with slavery outlawed in our country, people are building vast fortunes on the backs of hard working people. (There is nothing wrong with being in business.)

These craftsmen built the dreams of our nation and industry without always

sharing in the fruits of their labors. This must stop. The Bible warns that those greedy souls who withhold wages from whom wages are due are wrong. They will have to give an account for their greedy actions.

Over the years, the labor movement has grown and with that growth has been the wise development of training schools, thus bringing up a new generation of highly skilled workers, applying new technology, making them the most productive workforce in the world. This is the place where the laborer/craftsman needs labor-management, the union workers' representation. One person alone is powerless, but

together we can share in the prosperity of our industry and our nation.

Thank you, labor organizers and representatives, for all you do for us, your members. Please remember the ones that stand with you! May we not be guilty of greed like the ones we have fought against, but be a workforce and a management team that is ready to do the job of quality and quantity in production at a living wage.

Thanks for listening to just one worker.

Earl R. Carlton Jr.
Sheet Metal Workers 16
Madras



Making spirits bright in Salem

Marion, Polk, Yamhill Counties Central Labor Council held its 69th annual Holiday Party last month at the Elsinore Theatre in Salem. A packed house of kids, their parents, and grandparents had a chance to meet Santa and Mrs. Claus, played by Jack Rusen of Albany Steelworkers Local 6163 and his wife, (pictured above) after seeing the movie "Ice Age III: Dawn of the Dinosaurs." The Patrick Lamb Band, members of Musicians Local 99, sang Christmas carols and, afterward, everyone received a goodie bag. The labor council funds the annual event through donations from more than 14 union affiliates and unionized businesses. Serving as master of ceremonies again this year was Jeff Anderson (standing with Santa hat), secretary-treasurer of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555.

Unions ponder health reform bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The health care reform bill passed by the U.S. Senate on Christmas Eve is inadequate and too tilted toward the insurance industry, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said.

Senators approved the 2,700-page legislation, which would affect everyone in the U.S., by a 60-39 party-line vote at 7 a.m., after marathon debate forced by the chamber's 40 Republicans. A small number of Democratic senators also held the bill hostage by threatening to block a vote.

The AFL-CIO said the bill that finally passed puts the interests of insurance companies — and senators who would rather look out for the insurance companies — ahead of real reform.

"The labor movement has been fighting for health care for nearly 100 years and we are not about to stop fighting now, when it really matters," Trumka said. "But for this health care bill to be worthy of the support of working men and women, substantial changes must be made. Genuine health care reform must bring down health costs, hold insurance companies accountable, assure that Americans can get the health care they need, and be financed fairly."

Labor acknowledged that the Senate's bill makes a lot of important and necessary changes to the health care system, but says it falls short in three key areas:

- It lacks a public health insurance option, to offer real competition to insurance companies to bring down costs.

- It fails to make sure employers take responsibility and pay their fair share.

- It's funded through a new tax on working families' health care benefits. "It doesn't have to be this way," Trumka said.

The AFL-CIO supports the health care reform bill passed by the U.S. House. The House bill finances health care through a small tax on the very wealthiest of earners — those who reaped vast benefits from the Bush tax cuts — and it includes a public health insurance plan and real responsibility for employers.

Change To Win issued no statement, but posted on its Web site an open letter from Service Employees President Andy Stern, the coalition's largest union.

"At the very moment that we saw real and meaningful changes within our

grasp, one senator came forward to say 'No, we can't,' Stern wrote, referring to Connecticut Sen. Joe Lieberman, though not by name. "He can't let the Senate have an up-or-down vote on health insurance reform. And the result of this senator saying 'we can't?' The public option is declared impossible. Americans cannot purchase Medicare at an earlier age. The health insurance reform effort we have needed for a century is at risk."

There is still much work to be done to attain a final bill. Representatives of the House and Senate now must meet in conference committee to merge their two bills before a final vote is taken.

The AFL-CIO and its affiliated unions are asking union members to contact their congressional representatives and encourage them to support the House version of health care insurance reform.

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