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MEETING NOTICES

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NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

Volume 110
Number 5
March 6, 2009
Portland



Working on the railroad

The new Westside Express Service (WES) commuter train began running Feb. 2 along a 14.7 mile stretch along Highway 217 and I-5 in Southwest Portland. Above, Laborers Local 320 members (from left to right, kneeling) Daniel Lopez, Jose Robles, and Israel Pedroza-Rodriguez work on the track during the early stages of construction. Standing is track supervisor Derek Andersen. See the complete story on Page 12. (Photo courtesy of TriMet)

Weak economy blows hole in state budget

Oregon faces a \$3 billion shortfall; asks for 26 furlough days from state employees

Widespread job losses and swiftly falling business incomes have blown a hole in the budget of the State of Oregon, which relies on personal and corporate income tax to pay for schools, prisons, and social services. The 2007-2009 budget is coming up \$800 million short, and projections are for a \$3 billion shortfall in the 2009-2011 budget. That could spell a shortened school year and a host of other cuts.

Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski is asking public employee unions to agree to a wage freeze, step freeze, and 26 mandatory unpaid days off in the contract that would begin July 1 —

and then come back in December for more bargaining over wages and health insurance.

“It’s the worst proposal I’ve seen in over 30 years,” said Oregon AFSCME Council 75 Executive Director Ken Allen, whose union represents 7,000 state workers. Twenty-four unpaid days would amount to one furlough day per month for two years — and a nearly 5 percent cut in the workers’ take-home pay. Allen said public employees are prepared to consider sacrifices, but not until reserve funds have been tapped, and the Legislature does its job on the income side.

“A revenue crisis demands a revenue solution,” said Chuck Sheketoff of the Oregon Center for Public Policy, a union-friendly think tank that advocates for a fairer tax system. Oregon is in a revenue crisis, Sheketoff said, not a spending crisis, yet lawmakers’ first reaction is more often to cut programs.

“When you have a tax measure, you have winners and losers, and the winners are never as grateful as the losers are vocal,” Sheketoff said.

But the crisis atmosphere is emboldening lawmakers to take a look at tax increase proposals that didn’t get traction two years ago.

Revenue proposals originate in the House of Representatives, and last week the House Revenue Committee held hearings on a number of ideas for new revenue. Allen said AFSCME and other unions are backing tax proposals that don’t harm the working class.

The biggest would be a new and higher income tax bracket for the wealthiest income tax payers — individuals making more than \$125,000 and families earning \$250,000 or more. High-income taxpayers have seen their taxes go down substantially at the federal level in the last decade.

“To us it’s a no-brainer,” Allen said. “It’s what Barack Obama campaigned on in Oregon, and he won by 14 or 15 points, so it’s not controversial.”

If lawmakers fail to act on that proposal, Allen said AFSCME and the Oregon AFL-CIO are committed to pursuing a ballot measure that would do it.

Steelworkers celebrate Buy American clause in federal stimulus pact ... and take campaign to cities and states

By DON McINTOSH
Associate Editor

Buy American is back.

U.S. unions can’t make consumers buy U.S.-made products. But they can demand — when governments spend tax dollars to put Americans back to work — that the money be spent in the United States as much as possible.

Incredibly, that proposal was controversial during the early February debate in the Senate over the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the official name of the stimulus package. Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) led a fight to get rid of the bill’s Buy American provision, calling it a “protectionist measure.”

“How can you have an \$800 billion trade deficit and call us protectionist?” countered Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio).

The debate started when Rep. Peter Visclosky (D-Ind.) won a “Buy American” amendment to the stimulus bill — in a unanimous 55-0 vote in the U.S. House Appropriations Committee. The amendment required infrastructure proj-

ects paid for with stimulus money to use U.S.-made steel and iron. In the Senate version of the bill, the Buy American language was even stronger — covering not just steel, but cement and other manufactured goods. The provision can be waived for products that aren’t made in the United States, or if it adds more than 25 percent to a project’s cost.

But leading voices in corporate America began lobbying against the Buy American clause, arguing that if the federal government favored U.S.-made goods in its stimulus spending, it would provoke a trade war with America’s trading partners. Business groups, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Association of Manufacturers, and Associated General Contractors, came out against the Buy American provision, as did dozens of major corporations, including Caterpillar, Citibank, Cummins, Intel, and Procter & Gamble. Ambassadors from the European Union and Canada wrote letters critical of it.

And in the Senate, McCain likened it

to the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930, which placed record-high tariffs on imports of foreign goods.

But Buy American provisions have been part of U.S. procurement policy for more than 70 years, without provoking trade wars or global depressions, argued the Alliance for American Manufacturing, a group formed by the United Steelworkers and several U.S. steel companies. The Department of Defense has had a Buy American provision (The Berry Amendment) since 1941, and the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, and Federal Railroad Administration all have long-standing Buy America provisions.

McCain’s amendment deleting the Buy American provision was voted down.

But both sides declared victory when an amendment passed making it clear that the Buy American rules will be applied “in a manner consistent with United States obligations under international agreements.”

The United States has bargained away the right of government purchasers to favor domestic producers in a number of trade agreements. Those include the World Trade Organization’s Government Procurement Agreement (GPA), NAFTA, and various bilateral and regional free trade agreements.

Under the World Trade Organization’s Government Procurement Agreement, for example, countries that ratify the agreement can’t discriminate against products, services and suppliers from other signatory countries when they make government purchasing decisions. Of course, that reciprocal ability to bid on government contracts only applies to companies from countries that have signed the agreement — currently 39 nations besides the United States. China, India, and Brazil haven’t signed the GPA, so companies from those countries have no right to compete equally for government contracts in the United States.

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What's killing U.S. manufacturing?

[Hint: It's not what you've been hearing]

Ever hear about the overpaid union workers who made it too expensive to make anything in America? A new report by the non-profit Economic Policy Institute (EPI) suggests that piece of widely-believed conventional wisdom is inaccurate.

In "Squandering the Blue-Collar Advantage," EPI economist Josh Bivens concludes that America's blue-collar workforce is quite competitive with many overseas workers, but is undermined by an overvalued U.S. dollar, the high cost of U.S. health care, and ... overpaid managers.

The overvalued dollar is the most damaging factor, Bivens said, because it makes U.S. goods expensive abroad and foreign goods cheap here. Over the past 10 years, Bivens estimates, the currency imbalance created a 10 to 16 percent cost disadvantage for U.S. goods.

In theory, the dollar should lose

value when the United States runs trade deficits, and that would make imports more expensive and exports more competitive — thereby bringing trade back into balance. But that hasn't happened, in part because foreign investors bought U.S. assets to get in on the stock market run-up, and Asian countries, especially China, pursued a policy of buying dollars and dollar-denominated assets.

A second factor killing American manufacturing is America's lack of universal, government-provided health care. In the United States, employers are expected to pay for employee health care. In 2007, employer-paid health benefits accounted for 9.2 percent of total compensation in U.S. manufacturing. Foreign employers also pay for health care, but in the form of taxes that support much more efficient health systems. The difference, Bivens estimates, amounts to a 4.6 percent cost disadvantage.

Finally, there's the glaring cost difference that no one on the cable

talk shows mentions: U.S. managers are grossly overpaid compared to their foreign counterparts. Managers in the U.S. manufacturing sector average 134 percent higher wages than production workers. If U.S. manager wages matched those in the middle range of these other nations, overall labor costs in U.S. manufacturing would be 6.4 percent lower.

The EPI report focused on rich country competitors. Trade with low-wage countries has been gaining in importance, but the bulk of U.S. trade flows still occur between the United States and other high-wage countries.

Within that group, U.S. factory workers are the cheap ones: Of the 20 richest countries that account for about half of U.S. trade flows, the United States ranks 17th in hourly pay for production workers in manufacturing.

When the United States runs trade deficits with these rich nations, the thinking goes, something besides wages has to be making U.S. products uncompetitive.

"If the story of U.S. manufacturing began and ended with its blue-collar workers, the outcome would be far different from what we're seeing today," Bivens concluded. "In hourly pay and productivity, U.S. manufacturing workers give their companies a significant competitive edge — one that is being drained away by other negative forces."

Ground is broken on Fallen Workers Memorial in Salem

SALEM — Ground has broken on the new Fallen Workers Memorial at the main entrance of the Labor and Industries Building on the State Capitol Mall.

The Oregon AFL-CIO's Safety and Health Committee has been trying for more than three years to erect a permanent memorial to honor workers who have been killed or injured on the job. The idea started in 2005 with a resolution passed at an Oregon AFL-CIO convention.

On the week of Feb. 23, union workers from LCG Pence Construction began laying the groundwork for the memorial, which will consist of a large boulder within a landscaped sitting area near the main entrance of the L&I building. The boulder will have a union-made bronze plaque attached to it with the inscription:

*"In memory of Oregon's working men and women who suffered injury or loss of life on the job.
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working men and women of the Oregon AFL-CIO"*

The memorial will be dedicated on Tuesday, April 28 — Workers Memorial Day. Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski has been invited to speak at the service and to dedicate the memorial.

The national AFL-CIO declared April 28 as Workers' Memorial Day more than two decades ago to remember those who have been killed or injured on the job. Every year unions throughout the country hold services to remember those workers.

To date, \$37,500 has been collected for the Fallen Workers Memorial following a \$5,000 contribution from SAIF Corporation and the Oregon AFL-CIO, \$2,500 from Plumbers and Fitters Local 290, \$2,000 from the Steelworkers Legislative and Education Committee, and \$1,500 from Service Employees Local 503. Numerous locals have contributed anywhere from \$100 to \$1,000. Total cost for the project is \$49,765.

Donations can be sent to: **Oregon AFL-CIO, Worker Memorial Fund 2110 State St. Salem, OR 97301.**



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What a difference an election makes. Union ally Jeff Merkley — who as speaker of the Oregon House led passage of a law giving public employees an easier way to unionize — is now a U.S. senator. In contrast to his predecessor Gordon Smith, who rarely granted an audience with labor in 12 years, Merkley was already meeting with worker representatives on his first trip home.

Feb. 18, Merkley visited the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 48 hall in Portland to meet with building trades union leaders and their contractor association counterparts and explain the just-passed stimulus package. The package is likely to put thousands of union members back to work this year and next at prevailing wage federal construction and remodeling jobs.

Later in the day, he sat down to answer questions from the Northwest Labor Press.

Is the stimulus going to be enough to turn around the economy?

I don't think there's a magic wand here. We're in for a very difficult several years. Just to give perspective on this, the estimated drop in consumer demand for 2009 is a trillion dollars. The stimulus, assuming half is spent in 2009, would be less than \$400 billion. So you aren't filling the entire hole. Furthermore, we still have a tremendous lack of lending, and a huge problem with the bursting housing bubble and devaluation of housing. Those things contribute to a vicious vortex pulling the economy down. None of those are going to be resolved easily.

During the debate on the stimulus package, there was a big fight about the Buy American provision, which requires that steel and other components purchased in projects funded by the stimulus package be made in the United States. It ultimately passed. What are your thoughts on it?

Q&A with Jeff Merkley

I supported it. We're using American tax dollars, and we expect it to be spent to stimulate the American economy, not to be spent overseas.

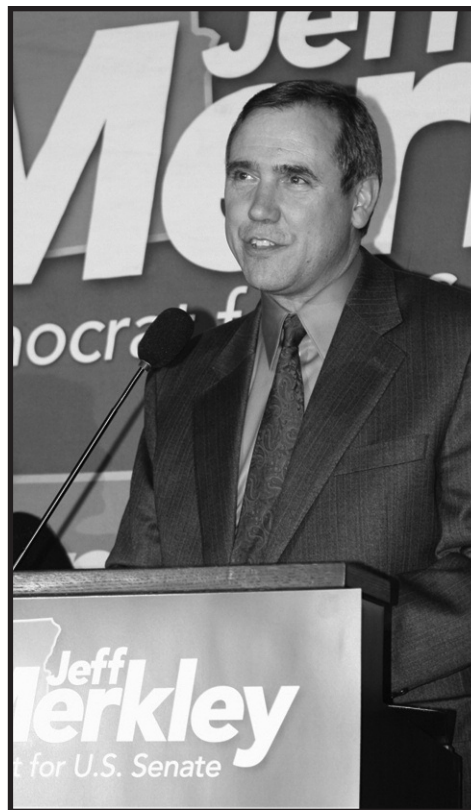
Will it run afoul of a World Trade Organization rule on government procurement that the United States is a party to?

I'll leave that to the lawyers to figure out.

Is there anything in the stimulus bill you feel personally responsible for, something you helped get into it?

A piece Senator (Ron) Wyden and I were working on behind the scenes, mainly by staff-to-staff contacts and urging of the Conference Committee, was an increase in education funding for the states. The state stabilization fund was cut on the Senate side, and then increased by \$14 billion when it went to Conference Committee. That's very important to states like Oregon that have a huge hole in their budget.

During your campaign you were dogged by opponents of the Employee Free Choice Act, the union-supported bill that would help workers



unionize and get a first contract. Have you heard from them since the election?

I've certainly heard from groups that oppose the Employee Free Choice Act. But the fact is I was very clear where I stood, and the citizens of Oregon supported me. I made the case that we need to make a reasonably fair path for citizens to organize. Right now we have a broken system, and we need to fix it.

How much of a priority is it for you?

It's extremely important to workers in the United States for fairness.

Do you have a short list of things you'd like to help accomplish this year?

Number one is to end the war in Iraq. Second is universal health care. A third is working very hard on global climate change. It is an economic imperative. We need to put the United States in the lead of developing and selling technology to the world. And it's a moral imperative, since failure to act will have devastating consequences on our ecosystems and on human civilization.

To get to universal health care, what approach do you favor?

We are the only developed society that does not have health care as part of our social contract with our citizens. We have the most expensive health care system but also the one that provides the least coverage of any developed democracy. There are number of blueprints that have been put forward — Obama's, Baucus', Wyden's. I have signed on as a co-sponsor to Wyden's blueprint. [Massachusetts Senator Ted] Kennedy is going to work closely with the White House and pull ideas from many different strategies. I am on the Health Committee so I'm looking forward to being immersed in that conversation. I have a lot to learn in that area. But I don't want us to miss this opportunity because we're arguing over the exact form. I want to make sure we seize this opportunity to provide health care to Americans.

You've been on the job just over a month. What was the most surprising thing to you about how the Senate works?

The amendment process. I knew bills were amended on floor. What I didn't realize is that those amendments could be put forward in short order with no analysis of their impact. So senators are really voting blind on issues of very significant policy.

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Established in 1900 at Portland, Oregon as a voice of the labor movement.
4275 NE Halsey St., P.O. Box 13150, Portland, Ore. 97213
Telephone: (503) 288-3311
Editor: Michael Gutwig
Staff: Don McIntosh, Cheri Rice
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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At Multnomah County

AFSCME #88 offers wage freeze to prevent layoffs

Multnomah County's largest union is proposing to freeze wages at current levels for a year, in response to worries about job and service cuts from a looming budget shortfall. The county is facing as many as 300 or more layoffs, depending on the final budget estimates.

Members of American Federation of State County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 88 who work at the county will vote March 9 whether to approve a contract amendment that would cancel a cost-of-living adjustment and step increases. Workers are in the middle of a four-year collective bargaining agreement that was ratified in July 2007.

Multnomah County is facing a projected \$36.5 million general fund shortfall in fiscal year 2010 (which runs July 2009 to June 2010). That represents about a tenth of the total budget.

Local 88 president Becky Steward said a wage freeze — spread out among the 2,700 county workers represented by the local — could save the equivalent of 70 to 100 jobs.

"It's, 'Let's all take a small hit so no one person

takes a huge hit,'" Steward said. "We're showing solidarity by all of us taking a hit so all of us can continue to stay employed and provide services."

The deal comes with conditions: Management has to take the wage freeze, too, and the money saved by the wage freeze on Local 88 members has to go to maintain jobs and services performed by members. The county can't use the savings for new projects.

Odds are, county managers wouldn't have money left over anyway. Even with the pay freeze, job cuts are still likely. Steward predicts two rounds of layoffs: one in July in programs the county pays for with its own general fund money, and a second in September in county programs funded by state dollars.

Cuts are likeliest at the Department of Human Services, which runs programs in mental health, aging and disability, developmental disability, and drug and alcohol treatment.

The county general fund pays for everything from rural sheriff's patrols and parole and probation services to animal control, restaurant inspections,

and alcohol and drug treatment. Its sources of revenue include a share of property tax, a 1.45 percent business income tax, a car rental tax, and a share of state Lottery proceeds. Oregon's property tax revenue will continue to rise even if property values drop, because Oregon ballot measures have resulted in "assessed values" that are far under real market values. But the county's business income tax is down dramatically, reflecting falling business incomes. That tax, which raised \$66 million in 2008, is projected to bring in \$46 million this year.

That means a tight fiscal belt just got cinched tighter. Steward said the county has cut staff every year but one for the last nine years. Local 88 is down 425 represented positions since 2001.

Local 88's wage freeze proposal came after the union created a task force to look at how to deal with the crisis. Two other options were considered — reducing hours and mandatory furloughs. About 650 members took part in an online survey; nearly two-thirds said they'd be willing to take a pay freeze. And that was the measure county leaders said would be easiest to implement.

...Curb tax subsidies, union says

(From Page 1)

Other revenue proposals under consideration:

- Increase Oregon's beer tax — currently the lowest in the United States and untouched in 32 years. Proceeds would be dedicated to drug and alcohol treatment, and that would free up those funds for other uses.

- Increase the corporate minimum tax — currently \$10 a year, and untouched since 1930. That's what some of the biggest companies in Oregon pay, if their books don't happen to show profit in a particular year.

- End the kicker refund — a practice unique to Oregon that sends money back to taxpayers if overall revenues exceed what the state economist predicts will come in. Those funds would instead be added to the state "rainy day" fund for use when revenues drop, as they are now.

- Slow down the amount of money going out the door in the form of tax breaks, like the Business Energy Tax Credit, a subsidy for renewable energy that cost the Oregon treasury \$200 million last year.

"What we're saying to Legislature is, 'You need to raise the revenue to plug these budget holes and protect services, and then we'll be ready to make whatever smaller sacrifice we have to make,'" Allen said.

Did You Know...?

More than 5,000 profitable corporations operating in Oregon paid no income taxes in 2006 beyond the \$10 minimum. Among the 5,156 profitable corporations that paid just \$10 were 31 with over \$1 million in Oregon taxable income.

In the mid-1970s profitable corporations paid 18.5 percent of all Oregon income taxes. Their share is projected to be just 6 percent during the 2009-11 biennium.

FROM THE OREGON CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY

In Washington, governor reneges on union contract, prompting lawsuit, bad blood

OLYMPIA — Washington is facing a projected \$8-billion-plus budget shortfall over the next couple years: Plummeting sales have sapped sales tax revenues, and sinking property values are expected to lower property tax revenues.

So far, Gov. Christine Gregoire has responded to the fiscal crisis with a hiring freeze, budget cut proposals, and by deciding not to ask the Legislature to fund a raise that her office negotiated with public employee unions last fall.

Gregoire's approach has prompted some bad feeling among unionists who supported her re-election in a close race in November, said Washington State Labor Council spokesperson David Groves.

Gregoire canceled a scheduled appearance at a WSLC's well-attended

Feb. 26 legislative conference, citing illness. Had she attended, she would have heard the message that the state's budget can't be balanced just by adjusting one side of the ledger.

"There were lots of what she liked to call 'tough decisions' in [the governor's proposed budget], but there wasn't a single corporate or special interest tax break that she wanted to repeal," Groves said. "If we're talking about sharing the pain, the business community can't be immune from that."

Tax increases in Washington must get voter approval, and Groves predicts the Legislature will go to voters with some proposal. But lawmakers can reduce or eliminate tax breaks without a public vote. That's something WSLC will push for.

Meanwhile, the state's biggest public employees union, 19,000-member

Washington Federation of State Employees, an affiliate of AFSCME, will go back to the bargaining table to renegotiate the current contract. The union sued the governor's office for breach of contract when she failed to ask the Legislature to fund modest raises in a contract that's supposed to begin July 1. But a Thurston County judge agreed with the governor's office that a contract isn't binding if it's fiscally unfeasible. The union is appealing that decision, and will also take the matter to the Legislature.

When the budget forecast worsened, WFSE had thought the governor would propose layoffs and closures, and the union expected to renegotiate to avoid those. Union members wanted to be asked to return to the table, not told by the governor that she wasn't going to ask lawmakers to fund the deal they'd agreed to. The union is planning a statewide "Day of Action" for Tuesday, March 17, including a rally at the Capitol, to send the message that an "all-cuts" budget is not the answer to the state's fiscal crisis.

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Labor law confab draws optimistic, capacity crowd

A sense of optimism reverberated among a record crowd of 260 union activists attending the 13th annual Labor Law Conference in Portland Feb. 27.

Conference coordinator Norm Malbin, staff attorney for the host International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 48, said it is the first time ever the event has sold out.

The conference is geared for shop stewards, business agents, and union officers so they can learn ways to better represent their members.

Tom Chamberlain, president of the Oregon AFL-CIO, said the optimism started last November with the election of President Barack Obama. "We might never have a chance like this again in our lifetime," he said, referring to labor's top legislative issue — enactment of the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA).

"I have to say, I see a lot of very new faces in the audience," said presenter Linda Davidson, officer-in-charge of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), subregional office in Portland. Davidson has worked at the agency for 30 years and has been a regular at the conference.

"We anticipate some form of EFCA will be passed," Davidson acknowledged. "We just don't know when, where or what it will look like" — or if the card-check portion of the legislation can survive intact.

Davidson reported that the NLRB has thus far survived major budget cuts under the Obama Administration. "The amount of money they're giving

us will allow us to effectively investigate cases," she said.

Labor law experts such as management attorney Richard Liebman of the law firm Barran Liebman LLP; Marcus Widenor, associate professor at the Labor Education and Research Center of the University of Oregon; and arbitrator/mediator Howell Lankford provided updates on employment law court decisions and led workshops that focused on helping union reps and stewards better prepare arbitration cases, deal with federal and state family medical leave, workers' compensation, and wage and hour laws.

Malbin said feedback from participants has been "incredibly positive" and that plans are already under way for number 14 — mostly likely at a larger venue.



(ABOVE) Michael Dunning of the Columbia County Road Department AFSCME Local 697 takes notes while listening to plenary speaker Rick Liebman. (BELOW) Ellen Hansen of the National Association of Broadcast Employees & Technicians Local 51 checks out the lineup of workshops and speakers. Hansen is a shop steward at KOIN-TV in Portland. NABET is a division of Communications Workers of America.



If a lay off is pending, call labor liaison

Shop stewards, union reps, and rank-and-file workers are reminded that Labor's Community Service Agency and the Oregon AFL-CIO have labor liaisons that can assist in the event of a layoff or closure.

"The sooner we are notified, the better," said Glenn Shuck, executive director of LCSA and a rapid response counselor contracted through Worksystems, Inc. (WSI), and Community Solutions for Clackamas County. "We can't stop the downsizing, but hopefully we can make the transition easier."

Bob Tackett is the Workforce Investment Act labor liaison for the Oregon AFL-CIO.

Shuck and Tackett provide dislocated workers with basic counseling, such as how to apply for unemployment insurance benefits, and referrals to skill assessment and re-training programs. They also understand how to interpret mandatory WARN layoff notices and the process of NAFTA and Trade Act benefits eligibility.

Shuck is the contact person for dislocated worker services in Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas counties and the statewide Hire Oregon Vets program. He can be reached at 503 231-4962.

Tackett handles outreach outside the Portland metropolitan area. He can be contacted at 503 585-6320 or by e-mail at bob@orafclcio.org.

Chiropractor seeks union's support as Congress considers health care reform

Portland chiropractor Daniel Beeson is reaching out to organized labor for support as Congress considers reforming the health care system in the United States.

His request? Encourage lawmakers to include chiropractic care in any reform package that it might come up with, and to expand coverage for services provided by Medicare.

Beeson said he and the American Chiropractic Association support a health care system that focuses on comprehensive wellness care and disease prevention — and not the current "sick care" model.

"Full integration of chiropractic services into a wellness-based delivery system has the potential to save money and increase patient satisfaction levels, as well as to expand patient treatment and provider options," Beeson said.

More than 47 million Americans are uninsured and the rising cost of health care is causing millions more to lose their existing coverage.

To find out more, go to www.chirovoice.org. Contact Beeson at 503 238-7025.

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Official Notices

BAKERY, CONFECTIONERY, TOBACCO WORKERS AND GRAIN MILLERS 114

Executive Board meets 10 a.m. Tuesday, March 24, at 7931 NE Halsey, Suite 204, Portland.

BOILERMAKERS 500

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

BRICKLAYERS AND ALLIED CRAFTWORKERS 1

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

CARPENTERS 1388

Members meet 6 p.m. Wednesday, April 1, at 276 Warner-Milne Rd., Oregon City.

CARPENTERS 1715

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

CEMENT MASONS 555

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

CLARK, SKAMANIA & W. KLICKITAT COUNTIES LABOR COUNCIL

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

COLUMBIA-PACIFIC BUILDING TRADES

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

ELECTRICAL WORKERS 48

Electrical Workers Minority Caucus meets 5 p.m. Tuesday, March 10, in the Executive Boardroom.

Sound and Communication Unit meets 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, March 11, in the Meeting Hall.

Residential Unit meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, March 11, in the Dispatch Lobby.

Vancouver Meeting, 6 p.m. Wednesday, March 11, at Round Table Pizza, 5016 NE Thurston, Vancouver.

Wasco Unit meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, March 11, at Pioneer Center, Bingen Meeting Rm, 971 NE Washington St, White Salmon, WA.

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

Bylaws Committee meets 5:30 p.m. Monday, March 16, in the Executive Boardroom.

Executive Board meets 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 18 and April 1, in the Executive Boardroom.

Electrical Women of Local 48 meets 5:30 p.m. Friday, March 20, at 5th Quadrant, 3901b N. Williams, Portland.

Marine Unit meets 5 p.m. Monday, March 23, in the Meeting Hall.

General Membership Meeting, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 25, in the Meeting Hall. Show-up early for sandwiches. Doors open at 5:30 pm.

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

DEATH ASSESSMENTS: The following death assessment has been declared for March and is payable at 50 cents: No. 2198, Jack Engleman.

ELECTRICAL WORKERS 280

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

Eugene Unit meets 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 18, at the LU 290 Training Center, 2861 Pierce Parkway, Springfield.

Salem Unit meets 5:30 p.m. Thursday, March 19, at 33309 Hwy. 99E, Tangent.

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

ELEVATOR CONSTRUCTORS 23

Members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, March 12, 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, March 18, at 1125 SE Madison, Suite 207, Portland.

FIRE FIGHTERS 452

Members meet 6 p.m. Wednesday, April 1, at 2807 NW Fruit Valley Rd., Vancouver, Wash.

FIRE FIGHTERS 1660

Members meet 8 a.m. Thursday, March 12, at 4411 SW Sunset Dr., Lake Oswego.

GLASS WORKERS 740

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

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

INSULATORS 36

Executive Board meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, March 11. Members meet 8 p.m. Friday, March 13.

Meetings are at 11145 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

IRON WORKERS 29

Members meet 7 p.m., Thursday, April 2, preceded by a 5:30 p.m. Executive Board meeting, at 11620 NE Ainsworth Cir., #200, Portland.

IRON WORKERS SHOPMEN 516

Executive Board meets 6 p.m. Thursday, March 12, at 11620 NE Ainsworth Cir., #300, Portland.

LABOR ROUNDTABLE OF SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

Delegates meet 8 a.m. Friday, March 13, at Home-town Buffet, 7809-B Vancouver Plaza Dr., Vancouver.

LABORERS 320

Members meet 7 p.m. Thursday, March 12, at Joe Edgar Hall, Teamsters' Complex, 1850 NE 162nd Ave., Portland.

LABORERS/VANCOUVER 335

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

LABORERS 483

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

MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES

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

LANE COUNTY LABOR COUNCIL

Delegates meet 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 25, at 1116 South A St., Springfield.

LANE, COOS, CURRY & DOUGLAS BCTC

Delegates meet at noon Wednesday, March 25, at the Springfield Training Center, 2861 Pierce Pkwy., Springfield.

LINN-BENTON-LINCOLN LABOR COUNCIL

Delegates meet 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 1, preceded by a 7 p.m. Executive Board meeting, at 1400 Salem Ave., Albany.

LINOLEUM LAYERS 1236

Portland area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, March 26, at 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland. PLEASE NOTE: The March 2009 meeting is "Special Call" to vote on contract ratification.

MARION-POLK-YAMHILL LABOR COUNCIL

Executive Board meets 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 10, followed by a 7 p.m. general meeting at 2110 State St., Salem.

METAL TRADES COUNCIL

Executive Board meets 10 a.m. Thursday, March 12. Delegates meet 5 p.m. Tuesday, March 24.

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

MID-COLUMBIA LABOR COUNCIL

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

MILLWRIGHTS & MACHINERY ERECTORS 711

Members meet 10 a.m. Saturday, March 28, preceded by a 9:30 a.m. Executive Committee meeting, at the Carpenters Hall, 2205 N. Lombard St., Portland.

MOLDERS 139

Members meet 6:30 p.m. Thursday, March 19, preceded by a 6 p.m. Executive Board meeting at the Carpenters Hall, 2205 N. Lombard, Portland.

NORTHWEST OREGON LABOR COUNCIL

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

OFFICE & PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES 11

Members meet 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 10, at the Laborers/Teamsters Hall, 2212 Andresen, Vancouver.

PLEASE NOTE: There will be nominations for the following officers at this meeting - President, 3 year term; Vice president, 2 year term; Recording Secretary, 2 year term; Sergeant at arms, 2 year term; Executive board Utilities, 2 year term; Executive Board Public Employees, 2 year term. Executive Board at Large (2 seats), 2 year term; Trustee, 2 year term.

PAINTERS & DRYWALL FINISHERS 10

Members meet 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 18, at the Asbestos Hall at 11145 NE Sandy Blvd, Portland.

PLEASE NOTE: Contract negotiations are underway. Your attendance is needed at this meeting. There will be raffles for three sets of Trail Blazer game tickets (2 tickets each). Please attend for your chance to win.

T-shirts, sweatshirts and coveralls are for sale at the office.

PILE DRIVERS, DIVERS & SHIPWRIGHTS 2416

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

PLASTERERS 82

Members meet 5 p.m. Wednesday, April 1, at 12812 NE Marx St., Portland.

PORTLAND CITY & METROPOLITAN EMPLOYEES 189

Executive Board meets 6:15 p.m. Tuesday, March 10. General membership meets 6:15 p.m. Tuesday, March 24.

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

ROOFERS & WATERPROOFERS 49

Members meet 7 p.m. Thursday, March 12. Executive Board meets 7 p.m. Thursday, April 2.

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

SALEM BCTC

Delegates meet 10 a.m. Thursday, April 2, at the IBEW 280 Training Center, 33309 Hwy 99E, Tangent.

SHEET METAL WORKERS 16

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

Medford area members meet 5 p.m. Wednesday, March 11, at Wild River Pizza, 2684 N. Pacific Hwy., Medford.

Eugene area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, March 12, at the Local 16 Hall, 4748 Franklin Blvd., Eugene.

Coos Bay area members meet 5 p.m. Thursday, March 19, at Abby's Pizza, 997 First St., Coos Bay.

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

SIGN PAINTERS & PAINT MAKERS 1094

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

SOUTHERN OREGON CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

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

SOUTHWESTERN OREGON CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

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

UNITED ASSOCIATION 290

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

Astoria area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, March 26, at the Astoria Labor Temple, 926 Duane, Astoria.

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

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

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

Eugene area members meet 6:30 p.m. Monday, March 23, at the Springfield Training Center, 2861 Pierce Parkway, Springfield.

Klamath Falls area members meet 5 p.m. Tuesday, March 24, at 4816 S. 6th St., Klamath Falls.

Medford area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, March 26, at 950 Industrial Circle, White City.

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

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

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

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

USW 1097

Members meet 4 p.m. Wednesday, March 18, preceded by a 3 p.m. Executive Board meeting, in the union office building, 91237 Old Mill Town Rd., Westport.

USW 8378

Members meet 1:15 p.m., 3:15 p.m., 5:15 p.m., and 7:15 p.m. Tuesday, March 17, at the A-Dec Building at the Fairgrounds in McMinnville.

Retiree Meeting Notices

ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED AMERICANS OREGON CHAPTER

Executive Board meets 10 a.m. Thursday, March 12 at the Northwest Oregon Labor Council, at 1125 SE Madison, Portland.

Retirees meet 10 a.m. Thursday, March 26, at Westmoreland Union Manor, 6404 SE 23rd Ave., Portland. All retirees are welcome to attend.

CARPENTERS

Retired Carpenters meet for lunch 11 a.m. Monday, March 9, at Home-town Buffet, 10542A SE Washington St., Portland.

ELECTRICAL WORKERS 48

Retirees meet 11:30 a.m. Thursday, March 10, at Tebo's Restaurant, 19120 McLaughlin Blvd., Gladstone. For reservations and more information please contact Glenn Hodgkinson at 503 656-0028.

ELECTRICAL WORKERS 280

Retirees meet between 11:45 a.m.

and noon Monday, March 9, at Home-Town 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.

INSULATORS 36

Retiree breakfast 9:30 a.m. Thursday, April 2, at the Dockside Restaurant, 2047 NW Front Ave., Portland.

IRON WORKERS 29

Retirees meet 12 noon Wednesday, March 11, at the Local Union Hall, 11620 NE Ainsworth Cir., Portland. Lunch will be provided.

MILLWRIGHTS 711

Retirees meet noon Wednesday, March 18, at Hometown Buffet, 10542A SE Washington St., Portland.

NORTHWEST OREGON LABOR RETIREES COUNCIL

Business meeting from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Monday, March 9, at 1125 SE

Madison, Suite 100G, Portland.

OREGON AFSCME

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

SHEET METAL WORKERS 16

Retirees meet 11:30 a.m. Thursday, March 12, at Overlook Café, 1332 N. Skidmore, Portland. All retirees are invited to attend.

UNITED ASSOCIATION 290

Salem area retirees meet 12 noon, Wednesday, March 11, at Almost Home Restaurant, 3310 Market St., Salem.

Portland area retirees meet 10 a.m. Thursday, March 19, at 20210 SW Teton Ave., Portland.



(ABOVE) An unidentified Local 290 member enjoys a chair massage. (BELOW) Local 290 retiree Don Getman undergoes a free medical screening.



UA 290 offers members medical screenings as part of Dunn Health Fair

Members, retirees and spouses of Plumbers and Fitters Local 290 were offered free medical screenings, hearing tests, chair massages, healthy cooking classes, and more at the 12th annual Donald Dunn Health & Safety Fair held Feb. 28 at the union's training center in Tualatin.

Dunn was a member of the union and an apprenticeship instructor who died in a ladder mishap while working on a job in Salem. His wife sued, and used some of the settlement money to start a safety seminar for her husband's co-workers and their families. The fund has since run out of money, but the program was so popular that the training center continued it.

More than 300 members and spouses attended the Feb. 28 event — with 200 pre-registering for medical screenings to obtain a five-year risk assessment for coronary heart disease, type II diabetes and stroke.

Technicians from LifeLine Screening scanned the carotid artery to detect plaque build-up (an early sign of a possible stroke); they completed a 10-minute blood test to measure cholesterol and blood glucose levels, and each individual was weighed and measured to determine their body mass index. Results will be mailed to each participant.

"Local 290's health and welfare trust paid for the screenings as part of its health care prevention program," said assistant apprenticeship training coordinator Marci Wichman.

Lunch was provided by the Plumbing & Mechanical Contractors Association.

Additionally, lectures were held on "Surviving a Heart Attack" and "Diabetes-Care & Prevention," and Chef Shana Larsen spent the day demonstrating healthy cooking techniques.



(ABOVE) Daniel Lowery waits to pet Rocco at the 12 annual Donald Dunn Health and Safety Fair hosted by Plumbers and Fitters Local 290. Studies show that owning a dog can reduce stress. The dog's owner is Sue Ann Amedei (right). (BELOW) Chef Shana Larsen demonstrates healthy cooking.

The fair even had a dog — Rocco, a mixed Terrier puppy — on hand for petting. Studies show dog owners have less stress and lower blood pressure, and are less likely to suffer from depression.

The Red Cross Blood Mobile set up for members to donate blood. The goal for the day was to collect 31 pints.



IN MEMORIAM

RAY MICHAEL GIBSON, an active member of Vancouver Laborers Local 335, died Feb. 17 in a Longview, Washington hospital. Cause of death was pancreatitis. He was 49.

Gibson was born June 27, 1959 in California. His family moved to Washington when he was three.

He worked at Bemis Bag Company in Vancouver (where he met his wife Lorie) until a workforce reduction there led him to a retraining program operating heavy equipment. He obtained his CDL license and went to work for Finish Line Concrete Cutting as a dump truck/demolition expert.

Gibson leaves behind his wife, Lorie; three grown children, Desarae Gibson, Crystal Tarpley, and Chris Autry; and three grandchildren.

A memorial service was held Feb. 28 at the Northside Baptist Church in Vancouver.

In lieu of flowers, an account has been set up in memory of Ray at any Washington Mutual branch in Lorie Gibson's name.

A head-on collision Feb. 16 killed **DONALD L. SHIRRELL**, a shop steward and longtime member of Office and Professional Employees Local 11. He was 43.

Shirrell joined the union in June 1995 after going to work for NW Natural as a service technician. Shirrell also was a volunteer firefighter for the City of Molalla.

The mishap took place in Aurora at about 4:30 p.m. Feb. 16 when a white Honda Accord driving eastbound on Ehlman Road crossed the center line and crashed head-on into the NW Natural van driven by Shirrell. The driver of the Accord also was killed.

Shirrell is survived by his wife, Lynn; daughter, Stacey; and son, Jesse.

A celebration of life will be held March 8 for National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 82 Vice President **KELLY PENDELL**, who died Feb. 6 of cancer. The event will take place from 12:45 to 3 p.m., Sunday, March 8, at Columbia County Fairgrounds, 58892 Saulser Road, St. Helens, OR.

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Economist tells Bricklayers Union

Growing the labor movement will boost economy

Unions helped create America's middle-class, and unions will have to help America get out of one of the worst recessions in a generation, says economics professor Richard A. Levines.

Levines is a professor emeritus of economics at the University of Minnesota and author of "Middle Class: Union Made." He was the keynote speaker at the Feb. 21 pin awards and apprentice recognition dinner hosted by Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local 1.

"Middle class economies don't just happen. They are made," Levines said. "Our middle class economy wasn't built on cheap wages. Building unions is an important part of any policy that will have a permanent, positive effect on our

economy."

For too long, Levines said, so-called "experts" have been advising more borrowing, more tax cuts, and encouraging people to spend what they have.

"The experts are talking about every solution except the only one that makes any sense: Higher wages," he said.

The way to accomplish that, Levines believes, is by growing the labor movement. He said history shows that when unions have been strong, the middle class has been strong, and when unions have been weak, the middle class has been weak.

"This is no coincidence," he said. "If money goes to people who will spend it, the economy grows."

Levines said the only people who have benefited from the anti-union economic policies of the last eight years are people so rich they can't possibly spend their money in ways that stimulate economic growth.

"How many homes, cars and boats can you have? The super rich are hoarding money," he said.

Conversely, since 1980, real wages for rank-and-file workers have not kept pace with productivity. "We're working more and getting less," he said, noting that from 2003 to 2007 inflation-adjusted hourly wages for rank-and-file workers rose just a penny.

"Yet there are still people trying to stimulate the economy by lowering wages and laying people off. This doesn't make any sense at all," Levines said.

Levines says there are only a couple of ways to get money back into circulation. One is to raise taxes; the other — better way — is to increase workers' wages.

"Unions can help do that," he said. "You've done it in the past, and you're going to do it again."

"Our economic problems will not somehow magically fix themselves," he continued. "They can be fixed, but only through the power of middle class people working together toward the right goals."

Levines said it appears organized



Economics professor Richard A. Levines reminds members and retirees of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local 1 that America's middle class is union made.

labor has helped elect politicians and a president that favor unions and the middle class. "But there's no way any president is going to do the job that unions have to do."

"You've got a strong story. You've got the right story. You're doing the right thing," he said. "It's about wages, it's about keeping that share of that productivity in the hands of people who can spend it, so we can have a growing economy."

(Editor's Note: Middle Class: Union Made can be purchased in bulk order by labor unions and civic organizations. For more information, call 1-877-628-6233 or go to www.middleclassunionmade.com.)

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Taft Hartley Act

From another era when conservatives attacked labor

By **ROBERT WECHSLER**

There was a period in American history when business and Congress made a holy alliance against labor. The time was the late 1940s, the Democratic President was Harry Truman, and the legislation was the Taft-Hartley Act.

No single act of Congress did more to weaken the economic and legal powers of labor unions in America than the Taft-Hartley Act (officially called the Labor-Management Relations Act), which was passed by Congress in June 1947. President Harry Truman, whose veto of the bill was overridden by a conservative Congress, accurately predicted that the bill "would reverse the basic direction of our national labor policy."

The story of how the Taft-Hartley bill became law begins with the end of World War II. Returning veterans expected to see wage increases when they assumed their old jobs. Further pressure was put on wages when the federal government removed wartime price controls in 1946. Prices for basic goods shot up 25 percent in two weeks, and working people demanded increases in wages to cover this drop in their real income.

Predictably, a strike wave followed. The federal government estimated that industry generally could maintain its pre-war profits and raise wages 24 percent without raising prices. But corporations refused to grant any wage increases without passing the costs off to consumers. In September 1946, corporate profits rose to their highest level in

history — 20 percent higher than in the best war year.

With the outbreak of strikes, the public blamed unions for the higher consumer prices. The price gouging policies of corporations and their refusal to bargain in good faith at the bargaining table was ignored. All the press could see were strikes. Newspaper ads placed by corporations masquerading as "public interest" groups fueled these misperceptions.

LOW VOTER TURNOUT IN 1947

The 1946 election brought out such a low turnout of voters, including labor voters, that the Republicans, led by conservatives, gained control of both houses of Congress for the first time in 14 years. Reaction set in quickly as politicians fought each other to see whose bill could intimidate labor more.

The 1946 Hobbs Act limited unions' economic sanctions in a strike situation. States passed laws in 1946-47 which prohibited union security agreements, outlawed the union shop, restricted picketing, and provided for easy use of injunctions to break strikes.

By 1947, lobbyists for General Electric, Chrysler, Allis Chalmers, Inland Steel, and the other major corporations had written legislation to limit severely the activities of workers and trade unions. The bill was in fact a series of amendments to the 1935 Wagner Act. Sen. Robert Taft introduced it in the Senate while Rep. Fred Hartley guided it through the House. The Taft-Hartley Act was passed in Congress af-

ter a short period of what one representative called the "most vicious kind of corporate lobbying." When President Truman vetoed the bill, both houses of Congress voted to override him.

THE CONSERVATIVE AGENDA

What did Taft-Hartley do? It changed the way in which unions could represent their members by altering union security agreements.

The closed shop (a pre-hire union shop agreement) was outlawed except in a few industries under specific circumstances. Section 14b allowed states to prohibit any union security so that in more than 20 states today it is illegal for an employer to recognize the union shop. These state laws have been dubbed "right to work" laws, but in reality they deny basic union protection to any group which may want it.

Unions may exist in the shop or on the property, but they must defend all employees even though no worker is compelled to join the union. Statistics bear out the fact that workers in these compulsory open shop states earn less on average than in the states that don't have such a law.

Employees are limited in their ability to organize into unions. By contrast, their employers are allowed to make "captive audience" speeches on company time where employee attendance is mandatory. Under the guise of "free speech," employers have a free hand in intimidating their employees.

ORGANIZING CRIPPLED

The Act also outlines a series of

what it terms "unfair labor practices" by unions which restrain unions in bargaining and organizing. Furthermore, Taft-Hartley sets up guidelines on what constitutes a group of workers who can be organized. Employers have often challenged the composition of these groups or have charged unions with unfair labor practices in order to delay organizing drives for years.

Under advice from professional management consultants, corporations pay millions of dollars to use delaying tactics in order to break a union's momentum. Willing to risk fines, if they are ever assessed, employers fire union organizers and sympathizers in order to defeat any organizing drive.

Taft-Hartley limits the right of employees to picket. Secondary picketing and boycotts are prohibited. Picket lines can be set up only at the primary work site and with certain restrictions such as at certain gates. So-called "neutral" employers such as sub-contractors at a construction site cannot be picketed. Such limitations have undercut the economic power of the build-

ing trade unions.

Unions can be sued in district court for breaches of contract, illegal boycotts, and strikes. Supervisors are denied full union protection under the law. The Act establishes a mandatory 80-day "cooling off" period in a strike situation which the president deems will "imperil the national safety and health."

The passage of the Taft-Hartley Act has stimulated the National Labor Relations Board to play a more restrictive role in the relationship between labor and management. Since 1947, the Board and the courts have been deciding issues which should be decided by unions and employers at the bargaining table. Union organizing and bargaining in the South and West have been limited because state laws under 14b have made the open shop compulsory.

(Editor's Note: This article ran in October 2002 when George W. Bush was president. Robert Wechsler was the education director of the Transport Workers Union of America, AFL-CIO.)

PNLHA serious about preserving labor history

The rewards of history are pretty well-advertised. Entertaining and inspiring, history makes rich reading — and we all subscribe to the notion that knowing our history pays practical dividends. It does in fact help save us from repeating mistakes. Even more, it broadens our experience far beyond the confines of our own times and limited individual lives.

To top it off, history motivates with examples of achievement, while feeding our impatience at injustice. We can become more realistic and at the same time open to new ideas, making us more capable, versatile and ready to act in advancing labor's cause.

Here are three ways for getting more serious about union history:

First and foremost, by reading. Sandy Polishuk's "Sticking to the Union: an Oral History of the Life and Times of Julia Ruuttila" (2003) is hardly a tough assignment. It shows a lifetime of labor activism, from Astoria to Portland, truly close to home. For the larger national story, try Thomas Geoghegan's "Which Side Are You On? Trying to Be for Labor When It's Flat on Its Back" (new ed. 2004). More up to date is the engaging "Man Who Hated Work and Loved Labor: The Life and Times of Tony Mazzocchi" by Les Leopold (2007).

Second, every year a conference is staged by the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association (PNLHA) on a rotation between Oregon, Washington and British Columbia. The presentations and discussions — by union

members, labor leaders, students, and professors — range widely in regional struggles for justice in workplace and society. At the conference held last June in Vancouver, B.C., a featured speaker thrilled the house with a powerful story of how nurses — with the unexpected help of the Canadian Supreme Court — turned the tables on the right-wing Campbell government for privatizing their supposedly "public" health system and then busting their unions.

The call has been issued for this year's conference June 12-13 in Seattle. The 41st annual event is presented in collaboration with the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies at the University of Washington. For more information, go to www.pnlha.org.

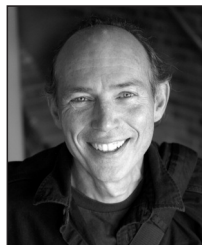
Third, to get truly up close to local labor history, join the oral history effort — research, interviewing, transcribing — to record and preserve labor history. The oral histories are offered for deposit at the Oregon Historical Society. For information on volunteering and interviewer training, contact Jim Strassmaier at 503 236-1094 or at strassj@spiritone.com.

PNLHA also has launched a membership drive. The annual registration fee is \$15 for low-income, retirees and students; \$25 for individuals; \$50 for contributing membership and retirees' clubs; as well as higher levels of support.

For more information, contact Ross Rieder in Seattle at 253-875-9498 or e-mail him at rossr241@aol.com.



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CWA complaint leads to unfair labor practice settlement

T-Mobile bosses in Portland interfere with union organizing drive

"Any union activity must be reported to HR and the [area manager]," said a May 30, 2009 memo, "the same day of the activity, including evening activity."

Sent to Portland-area managers at cell phone giant T-Mobile, the memo was signed by the company's human resources manager for the Pacific Northwest and Southwest Regional Divisions. The memo — later used as evidence in a federal unfair labor practice complaint — was a reaction to the arrival of union organizers at T-Mobile retail and call center locations around the United States. Organizers handed out fliers promoting "TU: The Union for T-Mobile Workers," and its Web site, www.t-mobileunion.org.

TU is a joint project of 700,000-member Communications Workers of America (CWA) and ver.di — the acronym for the 2.4-million-member German union that represents employees of Deutsche Telekom, T-Mobile's parent company. The company is con-

sidered a responsible employer in Germany, where laws and customs enable workers to have a union.

In the United States, on the other hand, no T-Mobile employee has union representation.

The memo, leaked to organizers, offers a glimpse of how companies like T-Mobile stay nonunion.

CWA Senior Director Ed Sabol took issue with it in a July 1 letter to top management at T-Mobile: "It has come to our attention that [a T-Mobile policy] requires employees to report any union activity to their managers. This policy is in clear violation of the rights accorded under the National Labor Relations Act."

"Please be assured T-Mobile USA has no such policy," replied T-Mobile Chief People Officer Larry Myers July 24: The memo he wrote was really about employees' duty to "report violations of T-Mobile USA's blanket policy prohibiting solicitation by any third party in retail areas during store hours."

That's not how workers interpreted it, though, said Jeannie Carpenter, a longtime organizer at CWA Local 7901 in Portland who now works for the Laborers Union.

"The e-mail had a chilling effect," Carpenter said.

Then a second memo was leaked to CWA organizers, with the headline, "For front-line managers only. Please do not print, post or distribute." Two pages long — and posted in full at nwlaborpress.org — it tells T-Mobile managers what to do if CWA organizers try to talk with employees. Managers are to:

- Refresh employees' understanding of "T-Mobile's no-solicitation and no-distribution policies."
- Remind them that T-Mobile's e-mail system is for business use only, and may not be used for solicitation on behalf of unions.

• Tell them they're not required to sign a union card, that no union can require T-Mobile to provide better wages, and that collective bargaining could result in the loss of certain benefits.

• Share with them that T-Mobile is growing and promotes from within, whereas union-represented telecom companies are laying people off. [CWA represents workers at AT&T Mobility, the cell phone carrier formerly known as Cingular.]

The memo concludes with a request that managers take part in a web-based training course on "this topic," (i.e., how to prevent workers from unionizing.)

In October, CWA filed an unfair labor practice complaint with the Na-

tional Labor Relations Board. The federal agency investigated, found merit to the complaint, and negotiated a Jan. 5, 2009 out-of-court settlement with T-Mobile. T-Mobile agreed to post a notice in all Portland-area locations for 60 days, affirming that federal law gives workers the right to form a union, and promising that the company will not interfere with, restrain, or coerce employees with respect to these rights.

"More specifically: We will not promulgate, maintain or enforce any rule that asks or requires you to report to us about your co-workers' support for, or activities on behalf of, the Communications Workers of America, AFL-CIO or any other labor organization."

Kourpias to speak at Oregon Alliance retirees convention

George Kourpias will be the keynote speaker at the annual convention of the Oregon Alliance for Retired Americans Saturday, March 14, at the SEIU Local 503 Hall, 6401 SE Foster Rd., Portland.

Kourpias, a retired International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers president, has led the Alliance for Retired Americans since its inception by the AFL-CIO in 2001. He did not run for re-election this year. He was succeeded by Barbara Easterling, retired secretary-treasurer of the Communications Workers of America (CWA) international union.

Easterling held what was in 1995 the highest position for a woman in the U.S. labor movement: secretary-treas-

urer of the AFL-CIO. The Executive Council appointed her to the post when federation President Lane Kirkland retired and Secretary-Treasurer Thomas Donahue succeeded him.

Then-Service Employees International Union President John Sweeney and then-Mine Workers President Richard Trumka beat the Donahue-Easterling ticket in the federation's first-ever contested election later that year in New York.

The theme of the Portland convention is "Let's Do It!" Registration opens at 8:30 a.m. and is \$25, which includes lunch, snacks and materials. For more information, call 503 284-8591 or e-mail valerijaj@comcast.net.

'Dirty Jobs' host decries loss of skilled trades jobs

Mike Rowe, the host of the popular Discovery Channel program "Dirty Jobs," has launched a Web site — www.MikeRoweWORKS.com — aimed at raising awareness about the amount of skilled trades jobs being lost in the United States.

After four years as host of Dirty Jobs, Rowe believes there is a bias against skilled labor as well as a nationwide shortage of educational programs to provide training for high school students interested in pursuing such careers.

"I've come to believe that we marginalize skilled labor," Rowe said. "We make fun of it. We avoid it. And the consequences of doing so are not good. Our infrastructure is crumbling around us. Yet somehow, we have a labor shortage and high unemployment."

With an arsenal of information and considerable personal experience, Rowe promotes educational awareness and user participation on the Web site. A long-time supporter of unions, Rowe is committed to changing how the world looks at work and skilled labor.

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OPEN FORUM

Columbia River Bridge will be built on the bedrock of performance goals ... and a brand new Cross-River Transportation Partnership

By SAM ADAMS and ROYCE POLLARD

A new I-5 bridge across the Columbia River is about more than the number of lanes or new transit service or tolls. It's also an opportunity to show ourselves and the nation a smarter way forward.

We must build a new bridge. But the right kind of bridge. And the "right bridge" must include a new cross-river partnership that actively manages daily mobility to get the most out of our investment in the Columbia River crossings.

The Portland-Vancouver metro area is poised to seize a unique opportunity as we plan for a new Columbia River Crossing (CRC). The project is one of great importance — and unprecedented magnitude — in Washington and Oregon.

As local elected officials in the two states linked by this project, we are joined in the following thoughts and proposal by Metro President David Bragdon, Vancouver City Council member Tim Leavitt, and Clark

County Commissioner Steve Stuart. All of us have participated in years of planning for the CRC, and each of us welcomes the benefits that a new crossing will bring to our community.

Done right, the project promises safer and more reliable multi-modal travel for people and goods, while reducing negative impacts on our environment.

Done wrong, today's gridlock moves south to downtown Portland; and 20 years from now the new bridge is once again filled with stop-and-go traffic.

With that in mind, we have a proposal for consideration by the community and the individual elected bodies giving us guidance. The idea takes us beyond decisions on lanes and construction, to a time when the new bridge is open and our communities can assess how the crossing functions within a larger system. We acknowledge that to the casual observer of this project, this proposal is an unusual step — but our region has always been home to innovation.

So we liken this new cross-river partnership to a thermostat. You would not build a home heating and cooling system without a way to regulate the airflow and control the temperature based on the time of day, outside conditions, and who is using what rooms.

Nor should we build a new freeway bridge without a mechanism to adjust conditions for maximum efficiency. Just as you would at home, we will define the "comfort zone" for the new Columbia River Crossing.

Before adjusting the thermostat, we need to build the house. Along with other members of the CRC Project Sponsors Council, we are slated to make a decision in March about the number of lanes on the new bridge. We propose that the bridge be built to accommodate up to three add/drop lanes and three through lanes. But these lanes will not be created equal. Our new partnership agreement will determine how the lanes will be phased and managed over time to get the right mix of tolling, HOV or HOT

lanes, vanpools, and transit fare programs to reduce vehicle miles traveled and pollution. Because our partnership recognizes that these decisions affect more than just the limited I-5 Bridge Influence Area, we propose to actively assess and manage other impacted areas, including the I-205 river crossing and Rose Quarter.

The Columbia River Crossing will function differently in 2030 than it does on opening day. Technology will change, as will community needs.

We share the belief that a performance-goal-based "thermostat" is the best tool we have to ensure the new bridge meets the needs of current and future citizens.

What we envision as an actively managed Columbia Crossing, no other jurisdiction in this nation has done. We are determined to blaze a new trail toward smart transportation management and protect our investment for generations to come.

And we look forward to putting our active transportation partnership into action for the benefits of both our communities — now and for future generations.

(Editor's Note: Sam Adams is mayor of Portland and Royce Pollard is mayor of Vancouver, Washington.)

FMLA should allow use of sick pay to mourn

To the Editor:

I read the "In Memoriam" article about Kelly Ann Pendell in the Labor Press. It really closely mimicked my wife Bonnie. She was also told she was clear and "they got it all" in the fall of 2005. The only difference is Bonnie discovered a lump in a lymph node under her arm 18 months later. This gave her a chance to try treatment. If not for the lump tipping her off, she would probably not have made it another six months.

She did undergo some very heavy-duty bio-immune treatments (chemo is ineffective with melanoma). The drug used is called IL-2. The success rate of metastasized with IL-2 — 3 percent get about 15 more years; 12 percent get 18 months to five years more; the other 85 percent get about six months. And this is with treatment.

Bonnie died May 3, 2008, leaving behind myself and my 12 (now 13)-year-old daughter.

Caring for her when recovering from treatments was time consuming. Changes in the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) were not in effect at that time, so I burned up most of my vacation — even though I had eight weeks of sick pay available.

During my time at home I sent letters to the governor and every lawmaker advocating Oregon House Bill 2485.

When my wife died I had no vacation left, but I still had eight weeks of sick pay that I could not use. I had three days mourning leave and any other time I took off was unpaid.

That is my next letter-writing campaign — allowing the use of sick pay under the FMLA to mourn the death of a spouse or child.

Robin Zimmerman
Bakers Local 114
Lafayette, OR

Seattle Times editorial misrepresents Washington's Worker Privacy Act

By DAVID GROVES
Washington State Labor Council,
AFL-CIO

With its predictably anti-union editorial (March 2), the Seattle Times — like the (other) paid corporate lobbyists in Washington state — misrepresents proposed state legislation called the Worker Privacy Act, while refusing to answer the central question of the debate: Why is compulsion — and the threat of punishment or firing — a necessary component of employer free speech on matters of individual private conscience that are not work-related?

The Times editorial does NOT object to the concept of protecting workers' freedom to choose whether to listen to employer communication on private matters of individual conscience, including politics, religion, and charitable giving. "Employers generally have no reason to hold (such) meetings," the Times says, despite legislative committee testimony to the contrary.

What Times editors can't stomach is including union-related issues on the privacy list.

The Times argues that the Worker Privacy Act, SB 5446 and HB 1528, would "restrict a company's ability to talk to its employees" and unfairly "disfavors" employer free speech about whether employees should unionize or on contract-related issues.

Employers retain the right to communicate about politics, religion, charitable giving — and yes, unions — under the Worker Privacy Act. Employers can still hold meetings, send e-mails, insert letters into paycheck envelopes, post fliers and communicate their opinions about ALL issues in a host of other ways.

After employers expressed concerns, both SB 5446 and HB 1528 were amended by the Senate and House labor committees to clarify and reaffirm employers' First Amendment rights to all forms of communication, including all issues of individual conscience.

The only thing employers CAN'T do under the Worker Privacy Act is threaten, punish or fire employees who choose not to attend such meetings or respond to such communications.

How does it "restrict" or "disfavor" employer free speech to remove the elements of compulsion and threat from employer opinions about union-related matters? The Times doesn't say, other than to suggest that "as a general rule of business" — whatever that means — employees can be required to attend meetings.

The Times laughably closes its editorial by suggesting this "one-sided" bill "restricts employers but not unions" in what is already "one of the most union-friendly states."

On what planet can unions require

people to attend a meeting? If you don't want to listen to a union organizer's pitch, you can shut the door, hang up the phone or delete the e-mail. If you are threatened by a union organizer, you can call the police and have that person arrested and charged with a crime.

If your employer forces you against your will — and with the threat to take away your family's livelihood — to attend a meeting on unionization or other matters of individual conscience, that's perfectly legal — or "a general rule of business," says the Times.

That's not right. And that's why we need the Worker Privacy Act.

(Editor's Note: David Groves is publications director of the Washington State Labor Council. To read more, go to www.wslc.org.)

Leave National Guard alone

To The Editor:

In response to one of the letters in the NW Labor Press, "Ways State Can Save Money:"

The one I totally disagree with is the one concerning the National Guard. They earn every cent they get and more. These people serve a very useful purpose and have to drop everything when they are called.

Of all the waste in state government, I think the National Guard should be left alone.

John Schell
Bricklayers Local 1
Retired
Portland

Democrats must tackle 'free trade' matter

To The Editor:

It is heartening that our friends in the Democratic Party are reversing some of the Bush Administration's anti-union policies. Yet the most damaging things have not been mentioned. I refer to NAFTA, CAFTA and the China trade deal that has sent more than 4 million manufacturing jobs overseas — even before the current downturn.

And, the deal cut by Japanese car makers, giving them a pass on corporate income taxes for cars made here in exchange for the U.S. jobs created, (nearly all of which are nonunion!) needs to be axed. These are the things we need to be pressuring the Democrats about.

Rep. Peter DeFazio would need very little encouragement to introduce a bill

to repeal the "free trade" agreements. Lets give it to him.

The Oregon Fair Trade Campaign is also working to reverse these job exporting fiascos and would welcome our help.

Dean Wolf
IBEW Local 48
Retired
Tigard

TriMet's new Westside Express Service is a unionized operation

By **DON McINTOSH**
Associate Editor

West-side Portland commuters got a new option Feb. 2, thanks to TriMet and a mostly-union skilled workforce.

The new Westside Express Service (WES) commuter train leaves every 30 minutes during morning and evening rush hours. The service uses four passenger train cars that make 16 week-day runs each way between Beaverton Transit Center and Wilsonville, with stops at Washington Square, Tigard, and Tualatin. There are also three park-and-ride lots along the route. Travel time is 27 minutes for the entire

14.7 mile stretch. For riders, it beats sitting in traffic on Highway 217 and I-5.

WES is Oregon's first modern commuter rail line and one of the few suburb-to-suburb commuter rail projects in the country. Before car was king, there was passenger train service along the same route, but that ended in 1933. In recent years, the line has been owned by Portland & Western Railroad and used for freight. WES operates on the same tracks as the freight trains, but the company has a contractual obligation to keep freight trains out of the way during WES runs, and

about a mile of side tracks have been built at various points to prevent delays, including at each of the stations.

To upgrade the tracks for passenger use, Tri-Met hired Stacy & Witbeck as the general contractor on the project, which broke ground in October 2006. Stacy & Witbeck employed 25 union-signatory subcontractors and 32 nonunion subcontractors. Union crews flash-welded rails; drilled, pumped and cut concrete; built station platforms; installed utilities; and put up fencing. Ampere Electric and Team Electric did electrical work. Tice Electric did traffic signals. Brundage-Bone performed the concrete pumping; Progressive Mechanical, Inc. did plumbing.

The completed trains are dispatched and operated by Portland & Western using eight engineers and conductors who are represented by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (a division of the Teamsters). And the trains are maintained by TriMet, which employs six mechanics who are members of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757. ATU members also clean the stations and do the landscaping at the WES Maintenance Facility in Wilsonville.

Construction costs for track, stations, and signals were estimated at \$112 million, while the trains were an additional \$26 million. The trains were made by Colorado Railcar Manufacturing, the only U.S. company that made self-propelled trains of this kind. The company ran into financial trouble and had to be taken over by TriMet to finish work on the trains, after which it closed its doors. About half the funding for the project came from the Federal Transit Administration.



Apprentice Laborer Theresa Economides swings a hammer on the WES track. (Photo courtesy of TriMet)

...Buy American proviso

(From Page 1)

Also, in each of the international agreements, the governments bargained over the extent of their obligations, including monetary thresholds, which goods and services are covered, and whether state governments are also subject to the agreement.

For example, the United States has exempted federal spending on mass transit and highway projects from all its international government procurement agreements. State-level procurement was left out of NAFTA, even when states are spending federal funds. And none of the trade agreements constrain local government purchases.

The GPA, meanwhile, covers state purchases, but only when they're above \$532,000 for supplies and services or \$7.5 million for construction, and only

when states have signed specific commitments to abide by the international treaty. Oregon and Washington are among the 37 states that have done so.

Former Gov. Barbara Roberts signed Oregon on to the GPA, agreeing to open procurement by the Department of Administrative Services to foreign bidders. And Washington opened state executive branch agencies, including general administration, transportation, and state universities — but not for all products: Fuel, paper, boats, ships and vessels are not covered.

So the Buy American language in the stimulus package won't apply in those cases where it would violate international commitments. But union leaders are still counting the Buy American provision as a major victory. It's seen as a signal that a trade policy that favors U.S. corporations over U.S. workers has lost favor with U.S. politicians.

Of course, the millions of U.S. jobs lost to offshoring may have shaped public opinion. In a nationwide survey of 1,001 U.S. adults conducted Jan. 29 – Feb. 1 by the Harris polling agency, 84 percent said they favor "Buy American" requirements: 66 percent said they strongly favor the idea, while 18 percent somewhat favor it.

Steelworkers officials say they'll be watching closely to see that the Buy American provisions are followed, and they're continuing to wage a nationwide campaign called Make Our Future Work. The campaign seeks to get city, county and state governments to pass their own Buy American resolutions — committing that they'll use stimulus money to purchase only products and services made or provided in the United States of America, whenever possible.

Locally, the union is seeking to get such resolutions passed by the Oregon and Washington legislatures and by city councils in Albany, Clatskanie, Lebanon, McMinnville, and Wauna, Oregon, and Longview, Ridgefield, and Vancouver in Southwest Washington.



In the brand-new Wilsonville WES maintenance building, TriMet's two daily shifts of train mechanics have kept busy since WES service began. Above, ATU Local 757 members Jim Whillans and Greg Durham stand before a train that was taken out of service for a week by an electrical fire. The fire was caused by a previously undetected defect in how wiring was installed.

It's official: Senate confirms Solis labor secretary

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Hilda Solis is the new secretary of labor. After Republicans backed away from an expected filibuster and agreed to stop their weeks of delaying tactics, the Senate on Feb. 24 approved Solis's nomination by an 80-17 vote.

"Finally, Americans will have a secretary of labor who represents working people, not wealthy CEOs," said national AFL-CIO President John Sweeney. "It is also a historic moment as Rep. Solis becomes the first Hispanic secretary of labor."

"She has long been a champion of working families," said Anna Burger, chair of the Change to Win labor federation. "She has fought for fair pay for women, health care for children, green jobs and the right for workers to have a voice in the workplace to improve wages, conditions and benefits."

The delay of Solis's nomination for partisan and ideological reasons was overcome by the grassroots support of millions of Americans who are struggling and desperately need a secretary of labor who will be their voice, labor officials said.

In the vote, 54 Democrats, 24 Republicans and two Independents voted for confirmation. All 17 votes against confirmation were cast by Republicans. Sens.

Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) did not vote.

Solis, a Democratic member of the U.S. House



Hundreds of Labor Department employees turned out Feb. 25 to welcome new Labor Secretary Hilda Solis to her first day on the job.

from California, was announced in December as President Barack Obama's choice to lead the Department of Labor, and her confirmation hearing took place Jan. 9. However, Big Business groups and some far-right Republican senators loudly complained about Solis's long record of support for working families and unions and delayed the confirmation vote for several weeks.

After a scheduled Feb. 12 vote was postponed because of Republican objections, the union movement created a Facebook page, "Americans for Hilda Solis as Secretary of Labor" to build some e-roots support for Solis. Nearly 2,000 people signed on.

During the floor debate Feb. 24, Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.) said Solis's working family background — both her mom and dad were blue-collar union members — gives her a real connection to the problems and trials those families face.

"We may be aware, but do we really understand?" Dodd said. "None of us are facing losing our jobs, our homes, our retirement security. We need a secretary of labor who understands what working families are going through."

In the U.S. House, Solis earned a 97 percent AFL-CIO working family voting record.