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# All aboard the gravy train!

*Seniors are the supposed beneficiaries of the new Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit, but the closer you look, the more it seems like it was set up to benefit drug and insurance companies*

By **DON McINTOSH**  
Associate Editor

In the beginning, Medicare was a simple idea: The government would help pay the medical expenses of the old. Sign up at age 65 — get a Medicare card, and present the card when you go to the hospital or doctor. They bill Uncle Sam for most of the expense. You focus on getting better.

Set up in 1965, Medicare is a single-payer health insurance system — for senior citizens.

It's funded by a small payroll tax

paid by workers and employers, plus monthly premiums paid by those enrolled, plus a direct transfer from the government's general revenues.

Medicare was an extension of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, and was seen by its authors as a stepping stone to universal health care. It came about because of 10 years of advocacy by the AFL-CIO and a landslide victory for Democrats in the 1964 elections.

Because it's a simple concept, with a uniform benefit and universal eligibil-

ity, it's very efficient. Medicare's administrative costs are 1.6 percent.

But in the reinvention of Medicare that is now under way, simplicity and efficiency have lost out to ideology and special interests.

The ideology is market ideology. The special interests are drug and insurance companies.

On Jan. 1, Medicare expanded into paying for prescription drugs.

Medicare could have issued a drug benefit card to all seniors, directed all pharmacies to send a bill to an address

in Washington, D.C., and used the combined purchasing power of 42 million enrollees to bargain with drug companies for the best deal possible.

But the architects of the new drug program believe in market ideology.

So instead, the government created a completely artificial market, in which nearly every feature is defined by the law. In this "market," new entities called "Prescription Drug Plans" compete with each other — with marketing and advertising — for participants. For every participant the plans sign up, the government pays the plans a certain amount. It's called capitation. Just as decapitation is head subtraction, capitation is head addition — the plan counts heads, sends the bill to the government, and the government pays a per-head bounty.

So rather than bill the government, pharmacies bill the middlemen, and the middlemen bill the government. The formula by which the plans are reimbursed eludes easy explanation. But it's enough to cover the plans' administrative and marketing costs, and profit.

"Every time you see a mailing or piece of advertising for one of these plans, that's a dollar that could have gone for lowering drug prices," says Bill Vaughan, senior policy analyst for Consumers Union, the group that produces Consumer Reports magazine.

Humana, a Kentucky-based health benefits company, is reportedly spending \$80 million on outreach efforts for its prescription drug plans. Aetna plans to spend about \$50 million, and other companies are dedicating substantial amounts. Presumably they expect to get back every penny. In addition, Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), the drug industry lobby group, is hiring public relations firms like Oregon-based Ulum Group to tout the merits of the new program at outreach, education and enrollment events. PhRMA didn't respond to Northwest Labor Press requests for information on how much its outreach effort is costing. Medicare itself is spending \$500 million on publicizing and

explaining the new program, and has assigned over 9,000 employees to answer questions about the new benefit.

The new program's administrative costs will be 12 to 13 percent the first year, according to Medicare estimates — more than six times the cost when Medicare doesn't deal with a multitude of middlemen.

"There's an ideology that private plans are more efficient and save money," says Bob Berenson, senior fellow at the Urban Institute, a Washington, D.C. think tank. "But the facts on the ground are that adding private plans in Medicare costs extra money."

Berenson points to Medicare's earlier move toward privatization, called Medicare+Choice. Medicare+Choice allowed Medicare participants to enroll in private insurance plans in place of traditional Medicare, with Medicare picking up the tab. Medicare+Choice was created by the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, and it was supposed to save Medicare money through the miracle of private-sector efficiency exemplified by the new breeds of health insurance: HMOs and PPOs (Health Maintenance Organizations and Preferred Provider Organizations.)

Within three years, the government's own budgetary watchdog agency was reporting that the new program was costing Medicare more, not less. In an August 2000 report to Congress, the General Accounting Office concluded that Medicare was spending 21 percent more per enrollee.

Did those facts cause a rethinking of market ideology? No, Berenson says. Ideologies are impervious to evidence.

In fact, the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003, which created the new Medicare Drug Benefit, rewrote the rules to favor private insurance plans even more. Medicare+Choice was renamed Medicare Advantage, with all the advantage going to the private plans. In a nutshell, Medicare is funding its own competition, and so generously that Medicare Advantage can afford to offer greater benefits to seniors than tra-



GOV. TED KULONGOSKI

## Building Trades Council first labor group to back Kulongoski for re-election

The Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council (OSBCTC), the statewide organization representing a majority of Oregon's construction unions, has endorsed Democrat Ted Kulongoski in his bid for a second term as Oregon governor.

"Ted Kulongoski has been a very good governor for the state of Oregon. His commitment to getting Oregonians back to work has been effective and is a breath of fresh air for Oregon politics," said Bob Shiprack, executive secretary of OSBCTC. "Governor Kulongoski has earned the endorsement of our 30,000 members and their families."

Construction trades delegates praised Kulongoski for his work in rebuilding Oregon's economy and for supporting critical trades issues, ranging from prevailing wages to working conditions. Kulongoski was commended for bringing jobs back to Oregon following the state's economic downturn in 2001, and for improving

the state's fiscal affairs. He also received high acclaim for securing much-needed capital improvements in the state's transportation infrastructure, which had gone lacking for too many years.

"Ted has balanced job creation and our environment. He appreciates both, as do most Oregonians," said Shiprack. "The governor has accomplished a great deal without the normal political bragging, and the Oregon Building and Construction Trades members appreciate his efforts."

Shiprack also recognized Kulongoski's efforts as insurance commissioner "in establishing Oregon's revamped workers' compensation system that protects injured workers, which is now the envy of many other states." He added that the Oregon governor played a key role in the creation of construction jobs by streamlining the state's construction permitting process. Shiprack noted that job growth spurred by Kulongoski's initiatives has attracted more young adults into the field, enhancing the future vitality of Oregon's construction trades.

The Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council is an umbrella organization comprised of 26 affiliated union locals representing more than 30,000 construction workers.

(Turn to Page 8)

## Let me say this about that

—By Gene Klare



# Labor Honor Roll

**THE LABOR HALL OF FAME**, sponsored by the Northwest Oregon Labor Retirees Council, honors living union retirees for the work they did on behalf of their unions and the rest of the labor movement. In this issue of the Northwest Labor Press and now and then in future issues, we'll look back to the past at women and men who deserve being listed on a Labor Honor Roll.

We'll start by recalling the work of Caroline Gleason, once described in the Labor Press as "one of the great heroines of the Oregon labor movement." She earned that accolade because she was responsible for passage of the first state wage and hour law in the United States of America. She was a 1910 graduate of the University of Minnesota.

**IN 1912**, Miss Gleason, a Portland social worker, undertook a survey of working conditions in factories and stores. In pursuing her quest for information, she took a job in a Portland paper box factory where she pasted labels on the ends of shoe boxes. Four decades later in the 1950s, she told the Labor Press in an interview:

"**AFTER TWO OR THREE** labels, our hands were covered with glue and had to be washed, but there was no hot water. We carried five-gallon pails to another part of the plant where live steam was pouring from a pipe. We held our pails under the pipe until the steam had heated the water. You must remember that this was piecework and all these preparations took time. In three days I earned \$1.52."

After quoting her, the Labor Press went on to say: "Miss Gleason also took careful note of the appalling sanitary and safety deficiencies in this and other plants. Her survey, published late in 1912, had such an impact that a wage-hour bill was introduced on the opening day of the 1913 legislative session."

**NOT LONG AFTER** compiling her survey, Caroline Gleason became a Catholic nun with the name Sister Miriam Theresa and worked as a faculty member at Marylhurst College, a Catholic institution near Lake Oswego. It later attained university status. Sister Miriam Theresa headed the school's sociology department and inspired young women students to become social activists.

**MAY DARLING**, another pioneer, was a Portland school teacher who in 1919 was one of the founders of Teachers Local 111, which today also represents other school employees.



MAY DARLING

May, once termed in a Labor Press headline as "Oregon labor's Darling," campaigned for passage of school levies throughout her career. In 1934, Darling was elected a second vice president of the Oregon State Federation of Labor, which was an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor. At the time, she was one of only 20 women in the U.S. who were officers of state labor federations. Darling was a founder of the Oregon State Labor Federation's college scholarship program in 1947. It was continued by the Oregon AFL-CIO, which was formed in 1956 in a merger of the state councils of the American Federation of Labor and the

Congress of Industrial Organizations, and still exists today.

**IN 1916**, **ELIZABETH GEE** of the Garment Workers Union in Portland ran for a state representative post in the Oregon Legislature. Although endorsed by labor, she lost.

**MRS. C.C. GUNDEN** was president of the Portland Carpenters Ladies Auxiliary Union No. 15 when the Auxiliary won second prize for its float in the 1919 Portland Rose Festival Parade.

**GERTRUDE SWEET** joined Portland Waitresses Local 305 in 1920, became one of its leaders and went on to hold the office of vice president in the Hotel & Restaurant Employees & Bartenders International Union. (That

(Turn to Page 11)

# Nurses at Roseburg's Mercy Medical Center vote for ONA

**ROSEBURG** — Registered nurses at Mercy Medical Center voted Jan. 11 to join the Oregon Nurses Association. The vote, conducted at the hospital in Douglas County by the National Labor Relations Board, was 178 to 97 in a bargaining unit of 310.

The election is one of Oregon's largest union election victories in the last five years, and it represents the certification of the largest collective bargaining unit of registered nurses in Oregon by any union in more than 25 years, the ONA said.

The victory didn't come without some roadblocks.

In November, the hospital challenged the rights of 16 charge nurses to vote in the election by defining them as supervisors. The nurses withdrew their first petition for an election, and five of the 16 challenged nurses resigned their positions on the Organizing Committee to remove any suggestion of undue supervisor influence. Organizers quickly collected a sufficient number of authorization cards to submit a new petition.

Last month, hospital chief executive Victor Fresolone apologized in a letter to his nurses for an "inappropriate remark" he made to a physician in August. In the letter, he acknowledged "referring to some nurses as 'BMW's,' which, I regret, stands for 'bitchers, moaners and whiners.'"

Registered nurses at Roseburg's only community hospital had been

publicly voicing their concerns about compromised patient care due to inadequate staffing levels and deteriorating working conditions.

The hospital's nursing turnover rate was 17 percent a year, compared with a statewide average of 9 percent, according to a 2004 survey by the Oregon Center for Nursing.

The nurses said they sought representation with the ONA so that they could have greater control over their work setting to act as advocates on behalf of their patients.

"This confirms our commitment to

provide the best possible care to our patients," said Laura Garren, a 20-year Mercy employee who is a registered nurse in Mercy's Family Birth Place.

The next step for the nurses is to negotiate a contract with the hospital. "Mercy nurses trust that the hospital will respect their decision to be represented by the Oregon Nurses Association and that the hospital will agree to sit down and negotiate a contract with them in good faith," said ONA Assistant executive director of labor relations Paul Goldberg.

ONA represents 10,000 nurses.

## More Cingular Wireless workers sign up with CWA

Employees at Cingular Wireless continue to show what happens when workers have a free choice to form a union: Nearly 16,000 Cingular employees who once worked for AT&T before the Cingular/AT&T merger have joined Communications Workers of America since August under a neutrality agreement in which Cingular agreed to honor the workers' freedom to form a union when a majority signs authorization cards.

More than 2,400 Cingular Wireless workers became the most recent to join CWA in late December and early January. The new CWA members include 1,288 Orlando, Fla., call center workers; 400 retail sales workers at several Pennsylvania locations; 158 sales and customer service workers in Hawaii; 151 retail sales reps in Colorado; 51 retail sales workers in Iowa; and 14 New Mexico sales workers.

Last year, 400 Cingular call center employees joined Portland-based CWA Local 7901.

Including the newly organized units, CWA now represents 32,000 Cingular Wireless employees. Prior to the merger, CWA represented over 20,000 Cingular employees, but none at the non-union AT&T Wireless.

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# West Virginia miners afraid to speak out about safety problems

**Lawmakers say Bush Administration has filled worker safety agencies with industry insiders and demand investigation.**

TALLMANSVILLE, W. Va. — Workers at the non-union Sago Mine knew the facility was unsafe, but were afraid to speak out, according to the son of one of 12 miners killed in the underground explosion on Jan. 3.

But while John Bennett said his father and the other miners were afraid to discuss the mine's problems, AFL-CIO officials and federal reports say that Sago, in rural West Virginia's traditional coal mining area, was an extremely troubled mine.

And a list published by the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) shows it dumped several rules four years ago that could have bettered safety at Sago.

The explosion at Sago killed 12 miners underground and left a 13th in the hospital in critical condition. Lethal carbon monoxide was measured at three times the levels a person can safely breathe for a maximum of 15 minutes before succumbing.

In the past two years, federal MSHA inspectors cited the Sago Mine, (whose present owner, the International Mine Group, bought it two months ago,) more than 270 times for safety violations. Many were serious — such as collapsing roofs, faulty tunnel supports, inadequate ventilation and dangerous accumulation of flammable coal dust.

"My dad would come home at night and tell me how unsafe the mine was," John Bennett said during an interview on NBC's Today Show. His father, Jim Bennett, was among the 12 dead.

"We have no protection for our workers. We need to get the United Mine Workers back in these coal mines to protect [against] these safety violations, to protect the workers, ..." he said.

United Mine Workers President Cecil Roberts called Sago management's failure to tell miners about conditions and violations at the mine "inexcusable," the Associated Press reported.

Jim Bennett, who had worked in the mines for 30 years, was scheduled to retire in April, his son said. Several of those killed were veteran miners in their 50s and 60s.

John Bennett said the families want answers and they want accountability. "A lot of us can't understand how, in 2005, this mine could have 208 safety violations," he said.

Since October, MSHA has issued 50 citations to Sago, some as recently as Dec. 21, including citations for accumulation of combustible materials such as coal dust and loose coal. The agency said it would begin an in-depth investigation, including "how emergency information was relayed about the trapped miners' conditions."

Safety experts question whether an investigation will result in any change. And AFL-CIO President John Sweeney says the accident points up the Bush Administration's lax regard for worker safety and health, in the mines and elsewhere.

A 2005 report by the AFL-CIO

found that at MSHA, 17 standards to improve safety and health for miners have been withdrawn since President Bush took office, including air quality, chemical substances and respiratory standards. For the most part at MSHA, those standards that have been proposed during the Bush Administration favor industry by moving to roll back existing protections. There are no pending standards to protect miners from hazards on their job.

Moreover, MSHA's budget for the enforcement office also has declined. In 2001, the mine safety agency had 1,181 coal mine enforcement workers. Last year, the agency had about 1,080 workers. And President Bush has proposed a further cut to 1,043 in the current fiscal year budget. The FY 2006 budget proposes \$280 million in funding, (\$118 million for coal mine enforcement) compared with \$279.2 appropriated in FY 2005. Adjusting for inflation, that represents a \$4.9 million cut in real-dollar terms from FY 2005 appropriations.

Jordan Barab, a former special assistant at the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and a health and safety expert for AFSCME and the AFL-CIO, said the federal government is doing little to protect workers. "The fact is Bush has not requested budgets

for MSHA or OSHA that even keep up with the rate of inflation and mandatory pay increases over the past several years while penalties for OSHA or MSHA violations remain laughably low," Barab wrote on his Web site, [www.ConfinedSpace](http://www.ConfinedSpace).

The 2005 violations at Sago resulted in just a few thousand dollars of penalties. Most of the fines ranged from \$60 to \$440, even though many appear to be repeat violations.

U.S. Reps. George Miller (D-CA) and Major Owens (D-NY) have called for congressional hearings into the Sago accident — and mine safety overall.

In a letter to Rep. John Boehner (R-OH), the chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, the congressmen pointed to the Bush Administration's appointment of numerous officials to MSHA who have close ties to the mining industry.

"The committee should investigate whether the Bush Administration has employed people with proper regulatory experience in leadership positions at MSHA. Many senior MSHA officials have come directly from the mining industry, raising concerns about their ability to effectively oversee the industry and protect its workers," the letter said.

The United Mine Workers has compiled a list of MSHA officials' connections to the mining industry. For example, President Bush's first appointment to MSHA was Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health David Lauriski, a longtime management official in the mining industry. In addition, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor for MSHA John Caylor held management jobs with Cyprus Minerals Co., Amax Mining Co. and Magma Copper Co. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor for MSHA John Correll served in management posts at Amax Mining and Peabody Coal companies. Special Assistant for MSHA Mark Ellis served as legal counsel to the American Mining Congress. And Chief of Health for Coal Melinda Pon was a management official at BHP Minerals-Utah International.

"With mining company officials at the helm of MSHA, the agency's focus has clearly shifted away from protecting miners," Miller wrote. "These officials, in the last five years, have rolled back a number of regulations aimed at improving mine worker safety."

*(Editor's Note: Press Associates Inc. contributed to this article.)*

## Chamber fights majority card-signing agreements

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has stepped up its fight to outlaw majority sign-up agreements in which employers agree to honor workers' freedom to form a union when a majority signs authorization cards.

According to news reports, the corporate business group is circulating a "briefing book" on Capitol Hill that claims to outline union tactics and strategies it says unfairly force employers to accept the workers' choice to form a union. The group is supporting legislation that would make majority sign-up agreements illegal.

Its lobbying efforts come as support for the Employee Free Choice Act (H.R. 1696 and S. 842) has grown to 207 co-sponsors in the House and 42 in the Senate. Among other provisions, the act would strengthen protections for workers' freedom to choose by requiring employers to recognize a union after a majority of workers signs cards authorizing union representation.

For more information on the Employee Free Choice Act, see [www.afl-cio.org](http://www.afl-cio.org).

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# WHAT'S HAPPENING

## King documentary shown in Bend by Jobs with Justice

BEND — Union members and community activists were presented a free showing of "At the River I Stand," a documentary film about the 1968 Memphis sanitation workers strike and last march of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., on Jan. 19.

The 56-minute documentary, with a discussion about civil rights and the trade union movement, was sponsored by Central Oregon Jobs with Justice.

Fernando Gapasin, president of the Central Oregon Labor Council, led the discussion and Alison Hamway, secretary-treasurer of the labor council, participated.

In 1968, black sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee, waged a 65-day strike to gain recognition for their union, AFSCME Local 1733. Their slogan, "I Am a Man," gained them national attention and captured the aspirations of black workers for union representation and racial justice. King marched with the sanitation workers and was back in Memphis for a second march when he was gunned down by an assassin on April 4.

"At the River I Stand captures the class and racial conflict between whites and African Americans in Memphis and reveals the intra-class tensions between African Americans and the union movement," said Gapasin. "The film also depicts the internal struggles of Dr. King as he reached a higher level of race and class consciousness."

## Laws improve how public agencies award contracts

SALEM — Two new laws went into effect Jan. 1 that will improve how public agencies award public works contracts.

One requires all public entities awarding public improvement contracts to the lowest responsible bidder to submit a "Responsible Bidder Determination" form to the Oregon Construction Contractors Board within 30 days of awarding the contract. The requirement is part of Senate Bill 1006 passed by the Legislature in 2005.

In the past, contracts have gone simply to the lowest bidder, with no regard to the contractors' work history.

The second new law requires all contractors seeking public works projects to obtain a Bureau of Labor and Industries \$30,000 public works bond issued by a corporate surety authorized to do business in Oregon. The bond must be filed with the Oregon Construction Contractors Board before starting work on a contract or subcontract.

The bond will be used exclusively to pay prevailing wages determined to be due workers by BOLI.

The bond is separate and is required in addition to any other bond a contractor or subcontract is required to obtain.

To find bond forms or responsible bidder determination forms, go to the Construction Contractors Board Web site at [www.ccb.state.or.us](http://www.ccb.state.or.us) and click on the "What's New" section.

## Labor bowl for MDA scheduled Sunday, April 23

Mark your calendars for the 17th annual Labor Bowl Challenge to benefit the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA), Sunday, April 23, from 1 to 4 p.m. at Cascade Lanes, 2700 NE 82nd Ave., Portland.

Last year, Portland area labor unions raised \$20,000, bringing their grand total collected to over \$257,000.

In addition to bowling, there is a silent auction and raffle prizes. This year Gov. Ted Kulongoski has been invited to participate.

Money raised helps provide wheelchairs and braces for youngsters, medical care, research and summer camps.

Pledge packets are available at



## AFSCME strikes in Grants Pass

Public employees at Josephine County — members of AFSCME Local 3694 — conducted a four-day strike Jan. 8-12 before reaching a tentative deal with a state mediator and returning to work Jan. 13. Voting on the proposed contract was held Jan. 15-17, but results were not available at press time. Assuming it passes, county commissioners will vote their approval Jan. 18. The sides would not release details of the settlement until it is signed, but they did say it was retroactive to June 30, 2005, and will run through June 30, 2007. County employees had rejected proposals that included retirement take-backs, deferred compensation, reductions in paid time off (sick leave, family leave and vacation) and new restrictions on merit pay. An estimated 80 percent of the local's 330 members were on the picket line, union officials said.

the Northwest Oregon Labor Council or by calling Tor and MDA at 503-223-3177.

## PCC 'Brown Bag Series' will explore labor, business issues

Portland Community College is hosting a free Brown Bag Series to explore labor and business issues.

Discussions will be held from noon to 1 p.m. every Wednesday starting Feb. 1 to March 8 in Terrell Hall 122 of the Cascade Campus, 705 N. Killingsworth St.

Attendees can bring lunch, and coffee will be provided. The community is welcome to attend.

The Brown Bag Series schedule includes:

"Where will the jobs be?" Feb. 1: Christian Kaylor, a local workforce

analyst, will provide a macro perspective on the job industry.

"Ethnicity and Gender in the Labor Market," Feb. 8: Mary King, professor and chair of the Economics Department at Portland State University, is interested in the situation of women, people of color and low-wage earners. She will discuss major labor market trends and options for policymakers.

"Creative Services," Feb. 15: Anne Mangan, Portland Development Commission, and Julie Beeler, Second Story Interactive Studios, will discuss design activities locally.

"Going Global" Feb. 22: Dana Shannon, international business counselor and international trade adviser to the State of Oregon, will discuss what's happening with outsourcing, trade and issues concerning imports and exports.

For more information on the series, call 503-978-5242.

## DCTU to start negotiations with City of Portland

The District Council of Trade Unions will embark on contract negotiations with the City of Portland beginning Jan. 31.

"We feel good about it and are ready to do business," said James Hester, lead bargainer and union representative for the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 189.

The DCTU represents approximately 1,800 employees from seven unions, including AFSCME Local 189, Laborers Local 483, Electrical Workers Local 48, Operating Engineers Local 701, Painters District Council 5, Plumbers and Fitters Local 290 and Machinists Lodge 1005. The DCTU bargaining team has been meeting nearly every week since August in preparation for bargaining.

The DCTU bargaining team met with the city's bargaining team in a joint session on Dec. 16 to negotiate ground rules for bargaining.

Hester said the DCTU "will present a comprehensive and fair proposal" to the city at the first session. "It is the hope of the bargaining team the city's proposal will be equally fair," Hester said. "The extent and tone of the city's opening proposal will no doubt dictate how smoothly bargaining will be conducted."

The current contract expires June 30, 2006.

## Workers Memorial Scholarship deadline is March 1

SALEM — The deadline to apply for a Workers Memorial Scholarship for the 2006-07 academic year is March 1. Applicants must be Oregon residents receiving fatality benefits, a dependent or spouse of a fatally-injured worker, or the dependent or spouse of an Oregon worker who incurred a permanent total disability while on the job.

For more information, call Kathy Mossbrucker Oregon-OSHA at 503-947-7992.



## Zachary Zabinsky

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# Washington among 31 states AFL-CIO will pursue health care legislation

**The Fair Share Health Care campaign is modeled on a bill the Maryland Legislature approved.**

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) — Giving up on pro-worker health care action from Congress, the AFL-CIO on Jan. 5 launched a campaign for state-by-state laws in 31 states—including Washington—requiring large companies to provide health care for workers, or to pay the state to provide health care for the uninsured.

The Fair Share Health Care campaign is modeled on a bill the Maryland Legislature approved last year. It mandated all companies with more than 10,000 workers pay 8 percent of payroll costs for health care, or contribute the difference between what they do pay and that figure to a state fund for the uninsured.

The AFL-CIO-sponsored legislation would have different figures for different states.

The only big Maryland firm that flunked was Wal-Mart, and it urged Re-

publican Gov. Robert Ehrlich to veto the bill, which he did. On Jan. 13, 2006, the Maryland House voted 88-60 in favor of overriding the veto.

National AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said the drive is aimed at Wal-Mart and other large firms that do not cover their workers' health insurance.

"It's nothing short of immoral that big, rich companies are shirking their responsibilities to their employees. We're talking about mothers and fathers who are pushed to tears because they can't take their children to the doctor. And it's happening every day," Sweeney said.

Wal-Mart and its ilk force other companies that cover workers, state taxpayers and workers themselves to pick up the costs of the uninsured—a form of cost-shifting which Sweeney called "freeloading off workers, taxpayers and smaller businesses."

Meanwhile, unions find company attempts to cut back health care coverage, or transfer its costs to workers, are the big battles in bargaining for the last several years, Sweeney aide Gerald Shea said. As a result, many workers forgo raises in order to retain health care coverage, or see health care eat up their raises and pay, he added.

The federation aims to change that scene through its legislative campaign, which will involve phone banks, lobbying state lawmakers and other pressure.

If lawmakers refuse to consider a fair share bill, the AFL-CIO and its member unions, who have spent a year in drafting a model bill and planning, will hold them accountable at the polls.

Initially the drive will be in Washington—where a broader initiative died in the Legislature last year—Connecticut, Iowa, Michigan, Georgia and Wisconsin.





The number of people without health insurance continues to climb—from 41 million in 2000 to 46 million in 2004, according to government statistics—at the same time, more companies are cutting back employer-based health coverage. In 2000, 69 percent of firms offered health coverage to workers, but in 2005 that percentage dropped to just 60 percent. In fact, more than a quarter of all firms with more than 500 employees don't offer employer-based health insurance for workers and their families, according to a study by the Commonwealth Fund, a nonpartisan private foundation that supports independent research into health care issues.

## Local Motion

December 2005

Union election activity in Oregon and SW Washington, according to the National Labor Relations Board and the Oregon Employment Relations Board

### Elections held

Company	Date	Union	Location	Results:		
				Union	No Union	
<b>First Student</b>						
12/14	ATU Local 757		Molalla	20	23	
<b>Aacres Allvest</b>						
12/16	IUSPFP vs. UGSO 38		Vancouver	7	1 26	
<b>Lile International</b>						
12/22	Teamsters Local 162		Tualatin	5	9	

### Elections requested

Company	Union	Location	# of employees
<b>Safeway</b> (Starbucks kiosk)		The Dalles	5
United Food & Commercial Workers Local 555			5
<b>Richmond Baking</b>		McMinnville	11
Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers, Grain Millers Local 114			11

**Mike Quevedo, Jr.**  
President, Southern California District Council of Laborers  
Co-Chairman, Laborers Trust Funds for Southern California



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# OFFICIAL NOTICES

## Auto Mechanics 1005

Executive Board meets 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 15. Members meet 10 a.m. Saturday Jan. 21, preceded by a 9 a.m. Shop steward training class. Shop stewards must attend training class and regular meeting to be compensated.

All meetings and elections are held at our Union Hall, 3645 SE 32nd Ave., Portland, Oregon.

PLEASE NOTE: Rochelle Conrad will be available from 8 a.m. to noon during the regular lodge meeting to answer any questions you have concerning health, welfare and pension plans.

ELECTION RESULTS: Pending.

SECOND BALLOT: There will be a second secret ballot vote for the position of District Delegate between two candidates that received equal number of votes on the first secret ballot. By special dispensation from our Grand Lodge Vice President Lee Pearson, the vote will be held during the regular Lodge meeting on Feb. 18, 2006, which begins at 10 a.m. at 3645 SE 32nd Ave., Portland, Oregon 97202. In accordance with Article II, Section 3, lines 20-30, page 6 and lines 1-20, page 7: Specific information as to who is entitled to receive an absentee ballot as hereafter provided shall also be communicated to the membership. Members who reside in outlying districts more than 25 miles from the designated balloting place, members who are either confined because of verified illness or on leave qualifying under U.S. and Canadian family leave laws, or on vacation, or on official IAM business approved by the L.L. or D.L. or G.L. or on an employer travel assignment, or reserve military leave, as the case may be, shall be furnished absentee ballots. Members applying for an absentee ballot on the basis of residing in an outlying district more than 25 miles from the designated balloting place shall have their eligibility to vote by absentee ballot determined by the R.S. and the S.T. before the ballot is mailed. Members found not to be eligible to vote by absentee ballot will be so notified within 10 days of the receipt of their application. Before the absentee ballots are opened and counted, the inspectors of election shall determine the eligibility of members to vote by that method, as defined in this Sec., with the exception cited above. Any member entitled to receive an absentee ballot shall make written request theretofore to the R.S. of the L.L. by delivering in person or mailing such request not later than 10 days before the election. Within 48 hours after receipt of any such request, the R.S. shall mail the ball if the records of the L.L. indicate that the applicant is eligible to vote in the election. (In those instances where L.L. membership records are kept and maintained by a D.L. with which such L.L. is affiliated, request for an absentee ballot shall be made to the appropriate D.L. officer).

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

Executive Board meets 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, Jan. 24, at 7931 NE Halsey, Suite 204, Portland.

## Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers 1

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

## Boilermakers 500

General membership meets 10 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 11, at 2515 NE Columbia Blvd., Portland.

## Carpenters 247

Executive Board members meet 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 24, at the Carpenters Hall, 2205 N. Lombard, Portland.

## Carpenters 1388

Members meet 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 1, at 276 Warner-Milne Rd., Oregon City.

## Carpenters 1715

Members meet 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21, preceded by a 5 p.m. Executive Board meeting at 612 E. McLoughlin, Vancouver, Wash.

## Cement Masons 555

Members meet 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 16, at 12812 NE Marx St., Portland.

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

Delegates meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 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. Tuesday, Jan. 24, at Kirkland Union Manor II, 3535 SE 86th, Portland. PLEASE NOTE: The Jan. 31 meeting has been canceled.

## Communications Workers 7901

General membership meets 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 26, at the CWA Office, 2950 SE Stark, Portland.

## Electrical Workers 48

Marine Unit meets 5 p.m. Monday, Jan. 23. Residential Unit meets 6 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 24. General Membership meets 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 25, preceded by a 5:30 p.m. pre-meeting buffet.

Wasco Unit meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 8, at the Wasco PUD, 2345 River Rd., The Dalles. Coast Unit meets 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 8, at Astoria Labor Temple, 926 Duane St., Astoria.

EWMC meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 8, in the Executive Boardroom. Sound & Communication meets 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 15.

Electrical Women of Local 48 meet 6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21, at NIETC, 16021 NE Airport Way.

Executive Board meets 6:30 p.m. Wednesdays, Feb. 1 and Feb. 15.

Bylaws Committee meets 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 24, in the Executive Boardroom. Meetings are at 15937 NE Airport Way, Portland, unless otherwise noted.

DEATH ASSESSMENTS: The following death assessments have been declared for Jan. and are payable at 50 cents each: No. 2090, William J. Horton; No. 2091, John L. Murr; and No. 2092, Hermann Sorger.

## Electrical Workers 280

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

Bend Unit meets 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 9, at the IBEW/UA Training Center, 2161 SW First St., Redmond.

Joint Unit meets 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 16, at the Central Electrical Training Center, 33309 Hwy. 99E, Tangent.

## Elevator Constructors 23

Members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 9, preceded by a 5:30 p.m. Executive Board meeting, at Kirkland Union Manor II, 3535 SE 86th, Portland.

## Exterior & Interior Specialists 2154

Members meet 5 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 15, at 1125 SE Madison, Suite 207, Portland.

## Fire Fighters 452

Members meet 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 1, at 2807 NW Fruit Valley Rd., Vancouver, Wash.

## Glass Workers 740

Executive Board members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 2, at the Union Office, 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

Portland area members meet 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 2, at the Asbestos Workers Hall, 11145 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

Eugene area members meet 5 p.m. Monday, Feb. 6, at Holiday Inn Express, 3480 Hutton St., Springfield.

Salem area members meet 5 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 7, at Candalaria Terrace, Suite 204, 2659 Commercial St. SE, Salem.

## Iron Workers 29

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

## Iron Workers Shopmen 516

Members meet 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 26, at Iron Workers Apprenticeship Training Center, 11620 NE Ainsworth Cir., Portland.

## Laborers 483 Municipal Employees

Members meet 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21, preceded by a 5:30 p.m. stewards' meeting, at the Musicians Hall, 325 NE 20th Ave., Portland.

## Laborers/Vancouver 335

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

## Lane County Labor Council

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

## Linn-Benton-Lincoln Labor Council

Delegates meet 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 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, Jan. 26, at the Union Office, 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland. Executive Board meets 5:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 6, at the Union Office, 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

Portland area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 23, at the Union Office, 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland. PLEASE NOTE: This meeting is SPECIAL CALL for the purpose of taking a strike sanction vote.

## Machinists 63

Executive Board meets 4 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 8. Members meet 10 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 11, preceded by a 9 a.m. stewards' meeting. Meetings are at 3645 SE 32nd Ave., Portland.

## Machinists 1432

Swing and graveyard shift members meet at noon Wednesday, Feb. 8.

Regular membership meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 8.

Shop stewards meet 9 a.m. Saturday Jan. 21. Shop Stewards must attend training class and regular meeting to be compensated. Meetings are at 3645 SE 32nd Ave., Portland.

## Metal Trades Council

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

Executive Board meets 8 a.m. Monday, Feb. 13, at NOLC board room, 1125 SE Madison, Portland.

## Northwest Oregon Labor Council

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

## Painters & Drywall Finishers 10

Members meet 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 15, at 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

PLEASE NOTE: Local 10 is now accepting nominations for Vice President. Please call the office if you are interested.

## Plasterers 82

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

## Roofers & Waterproofers 49

Executive Board meets 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 2. Members meet 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 9.

Meetings are at 5032 SE 26 Ave., Portland.

## Sheet Metal Workers 16

Portland area VOC members meet 6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 7, at the Sheet Metal Training Center, 2379 NE 178th Ave., Portland.

Portland area members meet 6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 14, at the Sheet Metal Training Center, 2379 NE 178th Ave., Portland.

Medford area members meet 5 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 8, at Abby's Pizza, 7480 Crater Lake Hwy., White City. Eugene area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 9, at UA 290 Hall, 2861 Pierce Parkway, Springfield, preceded by a 5 p.m. VOC meeting.

Coos Bay area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 16, at the Labor Temple, 3427 Ash St., North Bend. New member orientation will be held at 5 p.m.

There will be a SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS to change Building Trades Dues structure and percentage paid to Work Recovery. Votes will be taken at the following times and locations:

Medford - 5 p.m. Monday, Jan. 23, at the Labor Temple, 4480 NE Pacific Hwy, Central Point.

Coos Bay - 6 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 24, at the Labor Temple, 3427 Ash St., North Bend.

Eugene - 6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 25, at the UA 290 Hall, 2861 Pierce Parkway, Springfield.

Portland - 6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 26, at the Sheet Metal Hall, 2379 NE 178th, Portland.

## Southern Oregon Central Labor Council

Delegates meet 6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 14, at the Labor Temple, 4480 Rogue Valley Hwy. #3, Central Point.

## Transit 757

Charter members meet 7:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 20, in the Machinists Building, 645 SE 32nd Ave., Portland. Charter day members meet 10 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21, at Schoppert Hall, 1801 NE Couch, Portland.

Salem members meet 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21, at the Red Lion Hotel, 3301 Market St. NE, Salem.

Eugene members meet 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 22, and Eugene day members meet 10 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 23, at the Woodworkers Local Lodge, 1116 South A St., Springfield.

Corvallis members meet 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 23, at the McKenzie Conference Center, Salbasseon Suites, 1730 NW Ninth St., Corvallis.

Medford members meet 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 23, at the Hampton Inn, 1122 Morrow Rd., Medford.

Portland school bus members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 23, at Rigler School, 5401 NE Prescott, Portland.

Vancouver members meet 7 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 26, at the Laborers Hall, 2212 NE Andresen, Vancouver, Wash.

AMR Northwest Cowlitz County members meet 6:30 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 6 at Bruno's Pizza, 1108 Washington Way in Longview, Washington. Milwaukie members meet 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. Monday, Feb. 6, at Milwaukie Market Place Starbucks, 10826 SE Oak St.; Washington County members meet 7 a.m. to 9 a.m., Feb. 10, at Tanasbourne/Haggens, 18800 NW Evergreen Pkwy, Beaverton; Clark County members meet 6 to 9 a.m. Monday, Feb. 27 at Starbucks, 78th St and Hwy 99, Hazel Dell; and Multnomah/Clackamas members will meet 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. Monday, Feb. 27, at Izzy's Pizza, 1307 NE 102nd, Gateway Area, Portland.

Tillamook members meet 1:00 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 26, at the Odd Fellows Hall, next door to the Bay City Fire Hall in Bay City.

VALLEY TRANSIT—See your liaison officer.

PLEASE NOTE: ATU members are invited to attend any of the above-listed meetings.

## United Association 290

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

Astoria area members meet 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 24, at the Astoria Labor Temple, 926 Duane St. Astoria.

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

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

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

Eugene area members meet 7:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 23, at the Eugene #290 Hall.

Klamath Falls area members meet 5 p.m. Monday, Jan. 23, at the Moose Lodge, 1577 Oak Ave., Klamath Falls.

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

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

Salem area members meet 7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 25, at 1810 Hawthorne Ave. NE, Salem.

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

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

## USW 1097

Members meet 7:15 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 1, preceded by a 6:15 p.m. Executive Board meeting, in the union office building, 91237 Old Mill Town Rd., Westport.

# RETIREE MEETING NOTICES

## ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED AMERICANS OREGON CHAPTER

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

## ASBESTOS WORKERS 36

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

## CARPENTERS

Retirees meet for lunch 11 a.m. Monday, Feb. 13, at JJ North's Grand Buffet, 10520 NE Halsey, Portland.

## ELECTRICAL WORKERS 48

Retirees, wives and friends meet 11:15 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 14, at Steamers Restaurant, 8303 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland. A brief business meeting and drawing will follow. Ample parking available. For further information

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

## GLASS WORKERS 740

Retirees meet 11 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21, at JJ North's Grand Buffet, 10520 NE Halsey, Portland.

## LINOLEUM 1236

Retirees meet 11:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 10, at JJ North's Buffet, 10520 NE Halsey, Portland.

## MACHINISTS

Retired Machinists meet 10 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 1, at 3645 SE 32nd Ave., Portland. Meeting will be followed by a no-host lunch at a restaurant to be determined at the meeting.

## NORTHWEST OREGON LABOR RETIREES COUNCIL

Business meeting from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Monday, Feb. 13, in the

Northwest Oregon Labor Council board room, at 1125 SE Madison, Portland.

## OREGON AFSCME

Retirees meet 10 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21, at the AFSCME office, 6025 E. Burnside St. Portland. Call Michael Arken for information at 503-239-9858, ext. 124.

## TRANSIT 757

Retirees meet 9:30 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 1, at Westmoreland Union Manor, 6404 SE 23rd, Portland.

## UNITED ASSOCIATION 290

Retirees meet 10 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 16, at 20210 SW Teton Ave., Tualatin.

# The Memphis Sanitation Strike

On Monday, Feb. 12, 1968, 1,300 black sanitation workers in Memphis walked off their jobs. Their union was the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO.

The strike had started over a sewer worker's grievance. Twenty-two black employees of that department who reported for work on Jan. 31 were sent home when it began raining. White employees were not sent home, and when the rain stopped after an hour or so, were put out to work and paid for the full day. After the black workers complained, the city tried to mollify them by paying them for two hours' work.

The union demands were: better pay and working conditions, recognition of the union and a system of dues checkoff. The mayor of Memphis, Henry Loeb, refused to recognize the union, maintained that the strike was illegal and refused to discuss the workers' grievances until after they returned to work.

In addition, Memphis blacks felt deeply offended by the racist attitude of a cartoon in the local paper. They were also indignant because they felt the police had overreacted to a protest march by blacks by spraying Mace into the faces of the demonstrators. An aroused, angry and united group of ministers now led the black community into a campaign which broadened the original issues of the strike. It included a boycott of all downtown stores, the Memphis newspapers and marches and mass meetings in support of the strikers.

Meanwhile, the city secured a court injunction prohibiting striking against the city or picketing city property. Under its provisions, union leaders could be held in contempt and jailed if they disobeyed the injunction.

Also, two Memphis senators in the state legislature at Nashville introduced bills that would have outlawed the sanitation strike and prohibited union dues checkoffs from government paychecks. Organized labor in Tennessee at this point reacted vigorously and put pressure on state senators to defeat the bills.

Support for the sanitation workers also came from some white union members, 500 of whom marched together with the blacks on March 4. However, the strike dragged on without a settlement in view and tension mounted in the city.

The black community was now determined to keep pressing for more than the sanitation workers' rights.

It was concerned as well with police treatment, decent housing, job equality and above all, dignity. And to the black sanitation workers, recognition of their union by the city was crucial, because it meant that they would be treated as men and as equals, not as hired plantation hands at the mercy of the white boss.

Except for the support of some white unions, however, no element of white leadership in Memphis undertook to join hands with the blacks. The churches, the newspapers, business leaders, and the city council either supported the mayor or kept hands off.

Martin Luther King Jr. was now asked to appear on the scene to rally support for the sanitation workers. As the most magnetic civil rights leader in the country, he was in a position to focus national attention upon the plights of the Memphis blacks. Important labor leaders from all over the country expressed support and solidarity.

It was while he was on this mission in Memphis that King was assassinated on April 4, 1968. In a massive march which followed his death, civil rights and labor leaders pointed out that the most appropriate response the country could make would be to move towards a realization of King's goals, which began with a just settlement of the sanitation strike.

One immediate result of King's martyrdom was that it helped to win a victory for his last cause. Under pressure from civil rights and labor leaders, faced with black militancy and unanimity, worried about the effects of more boycotts and possible violence, the white Memphis establishment gave in. The city now did what the mayor swore it would never do — recognized the union, permitted a dues checkoff, granted a pay raise and introduced a system of merit promotions.

In this, his last campaign, Martin Luther King had chosen to join a labor fight — a fight that meant economic gains for black workers. King's decision to lead an economic offensive using a labor-civil rights alliance was a significant return to the strategy of the early 1960s and the March on Washington. Still ahead were the struggles for more jobs, better housing and improved educational opportunities for all backs. But, someone else would have to lead them.

*(Originally published by the American Federation of Teachers in Changing Education, 1975)*



## Martin Luther King talks about the labor movement

“The labor movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress. Out of its bold struggles, economic and social reform gave birth to unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, government relief for the destitute and, above all, new wage levels that meant not mere survival but a tolerable life. The captains of industry did not lead this transformation; they resisted it until they were overcome. When in the '30s the wave of union organization crested over the nation, it carried to secure shores not only itself but the whole society.”

—Speech to the state convention of the Illinois AFL-CIO, Oct. 7, 1965

“Less than a century ago the laborer had no rights, little or no respect, and led a life which was socially submerged and barren ... American industry organized misery into sweatshops and proclaimed the right of capital to act without restraints and without conscience. The inspiring answer to this intolerable and dehumanizing existence was economic organization through trade unions. The worker became determined not to wait for charitable impulses to grow in his employer. He constructed the means by which fairer sharing of the fruits of his toil had to be given to him or the wheels of industry, which he alone turned, would halt and wealth for no one would be available....”

“History is a great teacher. Now

everyone knows that the labor movement did not diminish the strength of the nation but enlarged it. By raising the living standards of millions, labor miraculously created a market for industry and lifted the whole nation to undreamed-of levels of production. Those who attack labor forget these simple truths, but history remembers them.

“Negroes are almost entirely a working people ... Our needs are identical with labor's needs: decent wages, fair working conditions, livable housing, old-age security, health and welfare measures, conditions in which families can grow, have education for their children and respect in the community. That is why Negroes support labor's demands and fight laws which curb labor. That is why the labor-hater and labor-baiter is virtually always a twin-headed creature, spewing anti-Negro epithets from one mouth and anti-labor propaganda from the other mouth.”

—Speaking to the AFL-CIO on Dec. 11, 1961

“In our glorious fight for civil rights, we must guard against being fooled by false slogans, such as 'right to work.' It is a law to rob us of our civil rights and job rights. It is supported by Southern segregationists who are trying to keep us from achieving our civil rights and our right of equal job opportunity. Its purpose is to destroy labor unions and

the freedom of collective bargaining by which unions have improved wages and working conditions of everyone ... Wherever these laws have been passed, wages are lower, job opportunities are fewer and there are no civil rights. We do not intend to let them do this to us. We demand this fraud be stopped. Our weapon is our vote.”

—Speaking on right-to-work laws in 1961

“With the settlement of many of these early strikes, there was little or nothing added to the pay envelope, little or nothing for job security and a mountain of debts to pay and harsh memories to forget. Yet there was one thing that was won, one thing that was fought for as indispensable, one thing for which all the pain and sacrifice was justified — union recognition. It seemed so minuscule a victory that people outside the labor movement scorned it as in fact just a defeat. But to those who understood, union recognition meant the employer's acknowledgement of that strength, and the two meant the opportunity to fight again for further gains with united and multiplied power. As contract followed contract, the pay envelope fattened and fringe benefits and job rights grew to the mature work standards of today. All of these started with winning first union recognition.”

—Speaking to shop stewards of the Allied Trades Council on May 2, 1967



### Brotherhood (and Sisterhood) of Man

“I am convinced that we shall overcome because the arc of the universe is long but it bends toward justice. We shall overcome because Carlyle is right when he says, 'No lie can live forever.' We shall overcome because William Cullen Bryant is right when he says, 'Truth crusted to earth will rise again.' We shall overcome because James Russell Lowell was right when he pro-

claimed: 'Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne, yet that scaffold sways the future...' Yes, this will be the day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands all over this nation and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: 'Free At Last, Free At Last. Thank God Almighty, We Are Free At Last.'”

**Dr Martin Luther King: “If the Negro Wins, Labor Wins,” delivered before the Fourth Constitutional Convention of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), Dec. 11, 1961**

*A message from your sisters and brothers in AFSCME Local 88, who celebrate the work, ideals and hopes of this great leader and find inspiration yet in Dr. King's words.*

# ...New Medicare plan forbids government purchasing pool

(From Page 1)

ditional Medicare is allowed to offer. By the end of 2005, about 500 managed care plans had contracted with Medicare, covering about 6 million enrollees.

"People are missing the point of the Medicare Modernization Act by focusing on the prescription drug benefit," Berenson said. "The real thing is it's an attempt to systematically do in traditional Medicare by making private plans more attractive."

To get the new drug benefit, seniors who don't have employer or union drug coverage have two options: join or stay in one of the Medicare subsidized HMOs, or sign up for a stand-alone Medicare-approved Prescription Drug Plan (PDP).

Market ideology says that by pooling the drug purchasing power of many enrollees, the Medicare Advantage plans or stand-alone PDPs can bargain down the price of drugs and thereby save money for taxpayers or enrollees.

To understand how preposterous that

is, you have to know two things:

1) In bargaining for a better deal, size matters. Larger groups of buyers get a better deal than smaller groups of buyers.

2) The authors of the Medicare Modernization Act specifically forbade the government from forming the biggest purchasing pool of all — it forbade the government from bargaining on behalf of all 41 million Medicare recipients. That would have lowered prices, possibly to the Canadian level, and hurt the profit margins of drug companies.

Instead, seniors will be divided among a great many plans. No state has fewer than 11 plans. Oregonians have 71 plans to choose from. Washingtonians have 73.

And the ownership patterns of the new PDPs raise all kinds of questions about financial conflicts of interest. The newly hatched PDPs were formed by drug companies, HMOs, PPOs, pharmaceutical benefit managers, large private employers and even the AARP, a private non-profit. The only entities expressly forbidden by the law from forming PDPs were state and local governments. They might have run the plans too efficiently, drawing customers away from private-sector competitors, and that goes against market ideology.

Presumably, the PDPs are negotiating some discount on the drugs they buy, just nowhere near the discount the government could have gotten directly.

But again, when the sponsors of the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 weighed the interests of drug and insur-

ance companies against the interests of seniors, seniors lost out.



ance companies against the interests of seniors, seniors lost out.

Not only did the law ban the U.S. government from trying to get a good deal from drug companies, it also prohibited reimportation from Canada, which does bargain a better deal for its citizens. All of the bill's sponsors — 19 Republicans and one Democrat — were recipients of generous campaign contributions from PhRMA. And one of the

bill's sponsors, Louisiana Senator Billy Tauzin, left the following year to become president of PhRMA. Medicare projects its new program will account for 28 percent of the total U.S. prescription drug market. Experts differ on whether the new Medicare drug benefit will cause drug prices to go up or down in the short run. Some think discounts negotiated by PDPs will temporarily reduce prices while others think drug companies will treat the new benefit like a blank check and raise prices.

After drug and insurance companies, there's a third group the new drug program will subsidize: employers and unions that were previously providing retiree prescription drug benefits.

Critics of the Medicare Modernization Act argued that the new government benefit would cause employers to drop coverage. Why keep paying for a retiree drug benefit when the government offers other options?

To prevent that from happening, Medicare set up a subsidy program. Employers and unions that contribute an amount equivalent to Medicare's contribution to drug plans will be partially reimbursed. The formula is complex, but basically rebates 28 percent of each qualifying retiree's allowable prescription drug costs. The subsidy is projected to amount to \$56 per retiree per

(Turn to Page 12)

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## What my daughter and grandson can tell us about health care reform

The experience of my daughter and grandson offers a telling example of what is right and what is wrong with our health care system in this country — and a reminder of how careful we should be when it comes to overhauling a public-private system that is critical to the financial well-being of working families.

Three years ago, my grandson, Antonio, was born with a severe case of cerebral palsy.

Antonio is a delightful boy with a beautiful smile, but he may never be able to walk or talk or care for himself. He has had numerous surgeries and battles frequent seizures. And my daughter has had to scale back her college studies as she cares for her son and navigates the health care system.

Still, we were lucky to have health insurance for both my daughter and my grandson at the time of his birth and in the months that followed, when his medical bills approached \$300,000. That insurance was provided by my former employer until my daughter turned 21 and could no longer maintain her status as a full-time student. Now we gladly pay \$900 a month to maintain coverage for her and Antonio. Otherwise, Antonio's medical bills would have wiped out my daughter's college savings and a good portion of her parents' assets as well.

When it comes to health care, my family has a lot to be thankful for. Thanks to a generous employer-paid health plan, Antonio's post-natal care was covered in full.

Thanks to a government mandate called COBRA, my daughter could continue that coverage on her own when she lost eligibility for my employer's insurance. And, thanks to family savings from living-wage jobs, we can probably help my daughter pay her health insurance premiums until she or her future husband gets a job with dependent health care benefits.

But, if my daughter didn't have the help that came from her family's good jobs with good benefits, she'd be in the same boat as tens of thousands of other parents of children with disabilities and disabled young adults in this country. I attended a

workshop on disability benefits with several of these parents and young adults last year. Many are eager to work as best they can, but they will have to stay relatively poor to qualify for health insurance paid by our government.

In order for Antonio to qualify for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and the Oregon Health Plan, my daughter can have no more than \$2,000 in assets beyond a home, furnishings and a car. Antonio can't qualify for Social Security disability benefits because neither he nor my daughter has prior employment covered by Social Security.

This is what has happened to our government's health and welfare systems. Unlike the social insurance programs offered in other wealthy nations, many social programs in the U.S. serve only the poor. Middle-class workers pay the bulk of the taxes that support these programs, such as SSI, but then they have to spend down their assets in order to collect those benefits when they need them.

It is worth keeping these realities in mind as we join the debate about health care reform in this country.

Former Governor John Kitzhaber wants to establish universal health care by ending tax subsidies for employers who provide health insurance for their workers and reducing Medicare benefits for higher-income seniors. In effect, he'd raise taxes on employers who provide health insurance and spend less on health care for older people in order to give government the resources it needs to extend coverage to the uninsured.

But the employers who would pay those higher taxes provide health insurance to 60 percent of Americans. That's what paid the bills for my grandson's post-natal care. And, if we shift more responsibility to government for providing health care, I'm concerned that lawmakers will limit benefits to those who are poor or nearly poor — a group that I hope will never include my daughter.

To his credit, Kitzhaber's plan would cover the uninsured. But many of the uninsured are working people whose employers shirk their responsibility for providing health insur-

ance. I'd rather force those irresponsible employers to provide health insurance for their workers before we ask good employers to pay more for their workers' health care or ask seniors to forgo some of their promised Medicare benefits.

Senator John Kerry offered different ideas about health care reform in 2004. He wanted the government to guarantee health care for all children and help good employers who provide health insurance by having the government cover the bulk of their catastrophic costs. His approach would have reduced employer-paid health insurance costs that are largely circumstantial or hard to control, e.g. the costs attributed to the number of kids enrolled in a given plan (by the way, union plans cover far more children than non-union plans) and the incidence of catastrophic events (like my grandson's post-natal care).

Kerry's ideas would be a lot more helpful to my daughter and grandson and to most middle-class families, because they would bolster the health benefits paid by employers.

Good health insurance is a bulwark of the middle class, as important as a living-wage job, home ownership and a good retirement plan. If we start to remove supports for our employer-financed system of health insurance, we will see more employers abandon their responsibility for their workers' health care and more middle-class families tumble into poverty. Then the taxes we pay on our paychecks will be stretched even thinner to help the growing ranks of the poor without health insurance.

Don't get me wrong. We need government to solve our health care crisis. Our union movement can't do it just by organizing more workers and bargaining better contracts. But we have to make sure that we demand solutions from government that encourage employers to continue their financial support for their workers' health care and provide affordable benefits for all working families, all income groups and all generations, from grandparents to grandchildren.

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

## CLUW reminds women to screen for cervical cancer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Reminding union women the overwhelming majority of health plans now cover the procedure, the Coalition of Labor Union Women is urging union women to make appointments in January for cervical cancer screening. The month is Cervical Cancer Screening Month.

"Cervical cancer is the only cancer for which we know the cause. Virtually all cervical cancers — 99 percent — are caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV), which can be detected through regular screenings before it becomes cancer," CLUW campaign coordinator Carolyn Jacobson said.

CLUW notes that more than 86 percent of female unionists — three times as many as a decade ago — have health insurance and most health plans today cover the Pap and HPV tests for women over 30. "It's up to each of us to make certain that union women know how to prevent getting cervical cancer. The most important risk factor for cervical cancer is the failure to be screened regularly," CLUW added.

Unionists can also check whether their health plans cover the HPV and Pap smears, and if not, why not. That information is available from the HPV Patient Help Hotline toll-free at 1-866-895-1HPV (1-866-895-1478).

If your health plan does not cover the HPV test or only covers it as a "diagnostic" test, then it's time to lobby your local CLUW says. It says female unionists should lobby "the union official you regularly deal with" on health issues "and find out what he/she recommends as the next step."

Unionists can arrange for materials for a presentation on cervical cancer,

by downloading data from [www.cluw.org](http://www.cluw.org), by calling CLUW at (202) 223-8360, ext. 4.



### Local 11 member seeks public office

Sherry Parker, a member of Office and Professional Employees Local 11, will run as a Democrat for the office of Clark County Clerk in Vancouver, Wash., this November. Parker has worked as a courtroom assistant in the Clerk's office since 1998. Prior to that she was a legal secretary/accountant for the Superior Court in the Juvenile Department. The Clerk's office has an annual budget of approximately \$1.5 million and a staff of 40. "I have experience managing people, time and resources," Parker said. "I know the challenges our office faces due to tight budgets and high caseloads and I know how the county budget process works." Parker is married to Philip A. Parker, a member of IBEW Local 48 and president of the Labor Roundtable of Southwest Washington. Two sons, Jeffrey and David, also are members of Local 48.



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# ...Drug plan explanations available

(From Page 12)

Or they can call a toll-free number 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) and wait on hold, to have someone do it for them. Reports are there can be a long wait time.

One in four Medicare beneficiaries — 10 million Americans had no prescription drug insurance previously. But only about 1 million of these had signed up by mid-December.

That's partly because many seniors are overwhelmed at the complexity of the choices. Even though benefits began Jan. 1, they haven't signed up. Bill Vaughan of Consumers Union calls it a "deer in the headlights" effect: Unfamiliarity and confusion can lead to inaction.

Of course, inaction may be the best course for those who already have employer- or union-sponsored prescription drug insurance that's as good or better as the new benefit. Seniors who did have such coverage should have received a letter telling them whether their coverage will continue for the next year. Most union and employer retiree drug plans had more generous coverage than the new government-subsidized plans, and most aren't dropping coverage yet. Retirees who are in these plans WON'T face the late penalty if they are later dropped and have to sign up for a private plan.

Here is some advice on the new drug choices for Medicare enrollees, based on conversations with a number of experts on the new program:

- If your employer or union is still

providing you coverage as good or better than the new Medicare benefit, save the letter they sent you about it. That can be used as proof later on that you were advised not to sign up for the private plans, and you won't face the higher premium penalty if your employer or union later drops the coverage.

- If you are currently enrolled in a "Medicare Advantage" plan, a kind of government-subsidized private health plan, you may want to consider staying with it and accepting the new drug benefit that the plan will automatically provide. If you sign up for a separate, stand-alone drug benefit, you will be dropped from the Medicare Advantage plan and enrolled in basic, traditional Medicare. Basically you can't be in both the stand-alone plan and the Medicare Advantage plan.

- If you don't currently have drug coverage of any kind but take few or no prescription drugs and don't currently need the drug benefit, you may want to choose the plan with the lowest premium. You'll have an opportunity to switch to a better plan in the last six weeks of each calendar year. You may end up taking expensive prescription drugs in the future and want to sign up for a drug plan. If that happens, the late enrollment penalty will make premiums more expensive.

- Use the Web site or the hotline to narrow down your choices by providing your preferred pharmacy and the list of drugs you take. Most people end up with 6 to 10 choices at this point. You

can request information from each, spend time studying them, and choose whichever one seems like the best deal for you. Just as it's hard to know whether you're truly getting the best deal on auto insurance or home insurance, you may just have to live with a little uncertainty about whether you're getting the very best deal in prescription drug coverage. There's nothing wrong with deciding you're not willing to spend unlimited hours reading the fine print of every plan. On balance, any plan will be of some help to you, because the government subsidy will be helping you pay your prescription drug bill.

- Don't be shy about asking for help. Many elected officials, including members of Congress and state legislators, have assigned staff to help constituents. Some work with other agencies to set up meetings to answer questions and help seniors enroll. Some of these meetings even have computers onsite and volunteers to help. Contact your representative for help with questions. Also, there are state and county agencies working to help seniors with the new program.

Oregon families can contact the Senior Health Insurance Benefits Assistance Program for free personalized advice on choosing the best Medicare prescription drug benefit by calling 1-800-722-4134. Additionally, residents of Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington Counties can call Clackamas County Social Services at 503-655-8427.

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# ...Back to the past

(From Page 2)

union later changed its name to Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) and is now UNITE HERE, having merged with UNITE, a union of workers in the needle trades and textile industry.) In the 75th anniversary edition of the Labor Press, published in 1975, Gertrude Sweet recalled that wives of loggers stood watch over paths in Northwest forests as their men met in secret to form a union — The Woodworkers.



GERTRUDE SWEET

**WAITRESSES LOCAL 305** produced a number of outstanding leaders. Agnes Quinn, an organizer, helped set up a soup kitchen in 1934 for striking Longshoremen in the bloody 1934 strike at West Coast ports. Quinn's crew obtained leftover food from Portland restaurants and delivered it to strikers on the waterfront picketlines with the help of taxi drivers who belonged to the Teamsters. Two of the Local 305 members who worked with Quinn were Alice Wesling and Mary Jackson, who later

became leaders of the union and served separate terms on the Labor Press Board of Directors. Wesling told the Labor Press in 1975 that Congressional passage of the National Labor Relations Act in 1935 was a boon to large-scale organizing of women. The law, signed by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, created the National Labor Relations Board and guaranteed workers the right to join unions. Wesling was the only woman on the blue-ribbon committee that put together the 1956 merger of the AFL and CIO state councils to form the Oregon AFL-CIO.

Other Local 305 leaders included Helen Marr, May Strand and Ellen Henderson. Marr was the wife of James T. Marr, who was the top executive officer of the state labor federation for 21 years from the mid-1940s until his retirement in the mid-1960s. Both Strand and Henderson were active in city and state labor groups and served at different times on the Labor Press Board of Directors. (Local 305 and other locals in what was sometimes called the Culinary Alliance later merged together into what is now Here Local 9, which is Portland-based.)

**JANET BAUMHOVER**, a charter member of the Portland local of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, chalked up many accomplishments in her career. Among her achievements were leadership positions in AFTRA where one of her colleagues was TV newscaster, reporter and commentator Tom McCall, who went on to serve as governor of Oregon in the late 1960s and early '70s. Baumhover chaired the Multnomah County AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education (COPE), was labor vice president for United Good Neighbors (now the United Way) and was the central labor council's reading clerk in the late 1950s, the '60s and to the mid '70s. A Portland women's group honored her as a "Woman of Achievement" in 1965. In her era she was thought to be the only Republican to chair a labor council COPE organization.

**EMSIE HOWARD**, who worked at the Labor Press in the 1950s and early '60s as associate editor, advertising manager and office manager, also deserves membership on a Labor Honor Roll. She was an activist in labor circles, Democratic politics and civic affairs. Articles she wrote won awards from the International Labor Press Association. She was an outspoken member of the Newspaper Guild who criticized her union's national leaders when she disagreed with their decisions. She served as vice chair of the Multnomah County Democratic Party, which then was the highest office available to a woman. Portland-born, she was a descendant of the pioneer Failing-family. She retired from the Labor Press because of health problems.

\*\*\*

## Charles Gilbert of Local 701 dies

Charles Edward Gilbert of Portland, a retired business manager of Operating Engineers Local 701, died of cancer on Oct. 19, 2005. He was 84 years old.

He held the office of Local 701's business manager in the 1960s and 1970s.

**HE WAS BORN** in Iowa on Dec. 19, 1920. He served in the U.S. Army Air Force in World War II. Later, he and his wife, Mary Elizabeth, who met in high school, moved to Portland. He became a heavy equipment operator and joined Operating Engineers Local 701.

He was active in politics and ran for public office several times.

**SURVIVORS INCLUDE** his wife, Mary E. Gilbert, two sons, Jimmy and Jerry; and several grandchildren.

Charles Gilbert's funeral service took place at the Western Forestry Center in Southwest Portland and was attended by a large crowd. Interment was in Willamette National Cemetery in Southeast Portland.

# Carpenter defends Wobblies and labor martyr Joe Hill

To The Editor:

In response to the letter written in the Dec. 2 issue of the NW Labor Press, "Unionist says record shows Joe Hill guilty," first, let me say that the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) never had a violent approach to organizing workers; militant yes, violent NO! Because they advocated and organized by direct action they were met by violence by the corporations who sought to keep workers oppressed.

The IWW was, in my opinion, the most dynamic union to exist in the world. It took the combined effort of the U.S. Government and multinational corporations to suppress their activities. Their fights for free speech along the West Coast were some of the most important efforts to reaffirm the right to organize in labor's history. Joe Hill was a part of that effort.

Of all the books I've read that deal with the controversy of Joe Hill, only one states that Hill was guilty — and that is Wallace Stegner's book, "Joe Hill, The Man Who Chose to be Shot." All the other books approach it from a point of view that Hill was framed, or at least from a little more objective view that gives enough doubt of the evidence presented during the trial to point to a frame-up.

Granted, Joe Hill was shot during the time of the execution of store owner John G. Morrison, and his son Arling. Now bear in mind that this was an execution of an ex-policeman who had a

history of brutality. Not a robbery. Hill had no motive to execute Morrison, but there were others who did, and Morrison had warned his wife that two men were out for revenge.

Morrison's other son, Merlin, who witnessed the shootings, said one of the men shouted when entering the store, "We got you now!"

Another point, it was NEVER determined that one of the gunmen (yes, there were two of them) was actually shot by Arling, who returned fire after his father was shot.

Joe Hill had two things which made him appear guilty: A gunshot wound and a red bandanna. There were others arrested during that time who also possessed red bandannas, one which was covered in blood. But all the other suspects were released when it was discovered that Joe Hill was an "IWW agitator, and an undesirable citizen" who had participated in free-speech fights and strike activity.

Another important point to bear in mind is that Utah had a legal precedent that no one could be executed on purely circumstantial evidence. Yet that is what they did to Joe Hill, despite a worldwide effort to have his sentence commuted to life.

There is enough evidence presented in the many books that deal with this subject to show that Joe Hill was framed for murder because he was an IWW activist. As would be proven later in the case of Sacco and Vanzetti, "the state

can make a man look guilty or innocent."

It was in the interest of the state, the Mormon Church and the copper trust to have Joe Hill executed as an example of what would happen to union agitators.

The reason Joe Hill continues to inspire union activist today was the courageous way he faced the authorities, right up to his execution. His songs tell the stories of workers' lives, struggles and efforts to organize while facing tremendous opposition.

I believe that after studying all the books and material written on the subject of Joe Hill, the man was framed and murdered by the State of Utah because he stood for the organizing of his fellow workers in the One Big Union. For more information on the subject of Joe Hill, I suggest you read the following books and come to your own conclusion:

The Case of Joe Hill, by Philip S. Foner.

Labor Martyr, Joe Hill, by Gibbs M. Smith.

Joe Hill, by Fred Thompson.

Joe Hill & The Making of a Revolutionary Working-Class Counterculture, by Franklin Rosemont.

Gene Lawhorn  
Vice President  
Carpenters Local 247  
Portland

## Hoehler, founding director of Meany Center, dies

BELLINGHAM, Wash. (PAI) — Fred K. Hoehler Jr., founding director of the George Meany Center for Labor Studies, now the National Labor College, died Jan. 4 from complications of prostate cancer. He was 87.

In the late 1960s, Meany, then AFL-CIO president, asked Hoehler, then at the Brookings Institution, to set up a labor leadership education program on topics such as collective bargaining, organizing and union communication. Hoehler developed its program and convinced the AFL-CIO to purchase the center's site in the D.C. suburbs.

Hoehler became the Meany Center's first executive director on the day it opened, Labor Day 1969. He served until 1984. He developed a college degree program working with Antioch College in Ohio and modeled after adult education programs he studied when touring Scotland, said his successor at the Meany Center, Robert Pleasure.

"His model was the Scottish University of the Second Chance, which provided higher education for people who were forced to go to work after

high school and didn't have the first opportunity that more affluent people had," Pleasure said.

The Meany Center became a fully accredited college in 2004.

Born on Nov. 18, 1918, in Cincinnati, Hoehler was the son of Fred K. Hoehler, Illinois director of social welfare for Gov. Adlai Stevenson. After serving in the Army Air Corps during World War II, he graduated from Arizona State and the University of Chicago. He taught at the University of Puerto Rico and Penn State before serving as assistant director of the AFL-CIO Social Security Department from 1954-56. He then taught at Michigan State and was the Steelworkers Union's education director from 1964-67.

"Fred created modern labor education," said Pleasure, now the education director of the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department.

"The first stage was a program for workers about the ideology of the labor movement. Fred took it to another level, providing education opportunities and practical applications to help union officials become more effective

leaders."

Hoehler is survived by his wife, Lisa Portman Hoehler, of Bellingham, and two sons, Fred III and Dan, both of California.

## Farm Workers leave AFL-CIO

The United Farm Workers union officially disaffiliated from the AFL-CIO. The 27,000-member union sent a letter to the labor federation Jan. 10 announcing its plan, which had been expected.

UFW has been allied with the Change to Win federation since it was established late last year following the breakaway from the AFL-CIO of the the Service Employees International Union, the Teamsters, the United Food and Commercial Workers, UNITE HERE and the Carpenters.

The Laborers Union also is part of the new federation and is expected to leave the AFL-CIO soon.

UFW said it hopes the move to Change to Win will boost recruiting efforts.

# ...New Medicare drug plan costs taxpayers \$32.1 billion

(From Page 8)

month for the first year.

However, the subsidy program seems to favor employer-sponsored retiree drug plans over union-sponsored plans. That's because the subsidy is a tax-free grant given directly to the "plan sponsor." Union benefit trusts are already tax-exempt. But companies pay taxes on ordinary income. That means that all other things being equal, a large company would get a bigger rebate sponsoring its own plan than contributing to a union plan.

It's not clear the subsidy will work in any case. In 2005 the Kaiser Family Foundation sponsored a survey of 300 large employers that provided retiree drug coverage. About 10 percent said they intended to drop coverage in the first year of the new program. An equal number planned to supplement government-sponsored plans with additional coverage. Expectations of remaining in the subsidy program dropped each year for the next few years.

Kathryn Bakich, head of National Health Compliance for Segal Company,

the largest benefits consulting firm in the U.S., said it was impractical for unions and employers to change what they were doing in the first year, because details of the new plans weren't announced until September 2005.

"Most of our clients are taking the subsidy," Bakich said.

The Medicare Modernization Act leaves almost no private health care entity unhelpt. After the employer subsidy, there is gravy for others lower on the food chain: rural hospitals, medical equipment manufacturers, auditors, actuaries, doctors. In every case, the vision is to use government regulation, and taxpayer dollars, to assist the private sector.

"There are certainly contexts where the private sector is markedly more efficient," says Yale University political science professor Jacob Hacker. "But in this case, essentially what the government is providing is insurance, and when it comes to insurance, there's a very strong rationale for the government to be the primary insurer because it's so much better at spreading these risks and doing it in a more efficient

way."

HMOs and PPOs have lost credibility as efficient ways to finance health care, adds the Urban Institute's Berenson.

"Health plans have failed in the private sector," Berenson said. "They're passing on all the cost increases mostly to workers in the form of increased co-payments. And in the face of that record, Congress goes and says we now

want them to solve Medicare's problems."

Last year, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the new Medicare drug benefit will cost taxpayers \$32.1 billion in 2006. That outlay is expected to triple in seven years.

But unlike original Medicare, which was largely self-funding, the drug benefit is a new expense without any plan for new revenue. There is no equivalent

plan to raise taxes, on the rich or anyone else, to pay for the program. In fact, the Bush Administration has been dismantling old taxes and breaking all previous records for running up deficits. That means that the overpriced drugs it's subsidizing for today's seniors will be paid for, with interest, by tomorrow's taxpayers.

The bill will eventually come due.

## Medicare drug program mindbogglingly complex

By DON McINTOSH  
Associate Editor

There's a new government benefit available for senior and disabled citizens who are eligible for Medicare — subsidized prescription drug coverage.

That's the good news. The bad news is: The program is insanely mindbogglingly complex.

In a nutshell, here's how the new program works, from the beneficiaries' standpoint: Senior and disabled citizens who are eligible for Medicare — and who don't have existing drug coverage — have until May 15 to sign up for a Medicare-approved private insurance plan.

Participation is voluntary, but if they don't sign up by May 15 and later want to join, they face a late penalty of higher premiums. The penalty is 1 percent each month.

Medicare says the new drug coverage will pay about half the cost of drugs for the typical senior. Though some plans are more generous than others (and may have higher premiums) plans have to offer at least a basic minimum benefit. The minimum benefit looks like this: Beneficiaries pay the first \$250 (a deductible). From \$250 to \$2,250 they pay 25 percent of drug costs (a co-pay). From \$2,250 to \$5,000 they pay 100 percent of the drug costs (this is termed a coverage gap or "donut hole"). And for costs above \$5,000 a year, they pay 5 percent.

Formularies — lists of covered drugs — also differ among plans and can change at any time. But the plans are required to offer at least two drugs in each of 43 therapeutic categories.

In Oregon, there are 71 Medicare-approved private prescription drug insurance plans to choose from; in Washington, 73. Each plan is different, with different monthly premiums, deductibles, co-pays, different drugs covered, and different pharmacies participating. Some plans are "stand-alone" plans that go with traditional Medicare. Others are "Medicare Advantage" plans that have added a drug benefit to a set of other benefits. Medicare Advantage plans are like government subsidized HMOs. But they replace "traditional Medicare" so you can't have both at the same time.

In the Northwest, the average premium cost of a new Medicare stand-alone drug plan is \$32 a month. That would be in addition to the \$88.50 monthly premium for basic Medicare.

By visiting the Medicare Web site and plugging in preferred pharmacy and the list of prescription drugs currently taken, seniors can narrow the list of choices down to just 6 or 10.

But then, a 2005 poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that 73 percent of seniors had never gone online at all. So they'll need someone else to do it for them — relative, friend, co-worker, neighbor, or government-provided volunteer.

(Turn to Page 10)



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