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Unions Are Ready To Build A New Bridge

Bi-state task force considers options for I-5 bridge over Columbia River

By DON McINTOSH
Associate Editor

Tired of traffic bottlenecks on and around the Interstate Bridge?

For the past two years, a 39-member bi-state task force set up by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) has been looking at ways to reduce congestion and improve safety on I-5 between Oregon and Washington.

The advisory group — the Columbia River Crossing Task Force — has sifted through dozens of bridge, transit and highway improvement project proposals, ranging from digging a tunnel under the river to supplementing the existing bridge to building a replacement bridge. The task force has winnowed the proposals to just five, and it expects to narrow it down to one by August.

The proposal that appears most likely to win approval would replace the I-5 Bridge with a new bridge no more than 200-300 feet to the West (downstream.) The new bridge would have five or six standard-sized lanes in each direction, including a safety lane, plus a bike/pedestrian path. And it would have light rail — either on a separate structure just next to it, or within it in some way, like on the bridge's underside. The new bridge would be about 90 feet above the Columbia River — high enough for boats to pass beneath without a bridge-lift, but low enough to avoid complications for air traffic from Portland International Airport and Vancouver's Pearson Field. When the new bridge opened, the existing bridge would be removed.

The bridge would be only one part of the project, however, which also includes improvements along the five-mile stretch of I-5, from State Route 500 in Vancouver to Columbia Boulevard in Portland. To improve safety

(Turn to Page 9)

NW lawmakers score well on AFL-CIO vote tallies

Reps. David Wu, Peter DeFazio and Darlene Hooley get perfect marks in the first session of the 110th Congress

Congressional representatives from Oregon and Washington scored quite well on the national AFL-CIO's interim Committee on Political Education (COPE) voting report card released last month in Washington, D.C.

The scorecard is a running record of 34 Senate votes and 33 House votes that took place during the first session of the 110th Congress, but it is not the official voting record for 2007. The AFL-CIO labeled lawmakers' votes as either "right" or "wrong," based on the position the AFL-CIO took.

Bills — and amendments to bills — included the Employee Free Choice Act, limits on guest worker programs, and federal minimum wage increases. A complete list of votes can be found online at www.aflcio.org under the leg-

islative section.

U.S. HOUSE
Oregon Reps. David Wu (1st District); Peter DeFazio (4th District); and Darlene Hooley, (5th District), were among 173 House Democrats to score 100 percent COPE voting records.

Also among the "100 percenters" were Washington Democrats Norm Dicks of Bremerton, and Rick Larsen of Bellingham.

Another 29 Democrats cast only one vote in disagreement with the AFL-CIO. Among them were Vancouver, Washington's Brian Baird, (30-1-2 absent); Tacoma's Adam Smith, (32-1), and Jay Inslee of Shoreline, (27-1-5).

The three Washingtonians' "wrong" votes came on a Farm bill that had attachments that both strengthened Davis-Bacon enforcement and ended privatization of some civil service jobs. HR 2419, according to the AFL-CIO



DAVID WU



PETER DeFAZIO



DARLENE HOOLEY

synopsis, authorized \$2 billion in federal loan guarantees for bio-refineries and bio-fuel production plants with requirements that all construction be enforced by federal Davis-Bacon Act prevailing wage standards. It also stopped the Bush Administration from continuing to contract out jobs of federal workers who conduct eligibility determinations for the food stamp program.

Also voting against that bill were Oregon Congressman Earl Blumenauer (3rd District), and Washington

Rep. Jim McDermott of Seattle. Blumenauer compiled a 30-201 scorecard and McDermott was 31-2. The Farm bill passed 231-191.

Spokeswomen for Blumenauer and Baird told the NW Labor Press that the congressmen are strong supporters of the Davis-Bacon Act, but that the Farm bill, overall, favored large agribusinesses over the needs of small farmers and rural communities, among other issues they had with the bill.

Blumenauer and McDermott also voted against labor's position on HR

1585, a defense authorization bill that was modified to restore the rights of federal civilian workers to collectively bargain. The bill, which set military spending priorities but did not actually allot the money, passed 397-27, with 25 Democrats and two Republicans opposing it. The opposition voters wanted conditions for troop withdrawal from Iraq. The AFL-CIO supported the bill because it deleted most of President Bush's plan to take away union rights for the Department of Defense's 700,000 civilian workers. But the defense measure also lacked limits on the war in Iraq, and that prompted the opposition to the measure.

The defense bill vote allowed 51 Republicans to avoid a shutout and register one "right" vote (1-33) on their COPE scorecards.

Oregon Republican Greg Walden of Cascade Locks (2nd District) scored 33 percent, with a vote tally of 11-22. Washington Rep. Doc Hastings of Pasco was one of the worst lawmakers, voting with labor at 2-29-2.

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...Gordon Smith votes 'wrong' on many unionization bills

(From Page 1)

Top Republicans voting in agreement with the AFL-CIO were Frank LoBiondo, Frank Pallone and Michael Ferguson, all of New Jersey, at 25-8, 24-9 and 23-9-1, respectively.

Democratic presidential hopeful Rep. Dennis Kucinich of Ohio came in at 23-4, with six absences, and Republican candidates Ron Paul of Texas and Duncan Hunter of California scored 4-23-6 and 3-27-3, respectively.

(Editor's Note: Officially, Rep. Peter DeFazio has the best lifetime AFL-CIO COPE voting record in the Pacific Northwest at 94 percent (221-15). He is followed by Earl Blumenauer at 92 percent (110-10); David Wu at 90 percent (89-10); Brian Baird at 89 percent (85-11), and Darlene Hooley at 86 percent (100-16). Greg Walden leads Republicans from the Pacific Northwest at 20 percent (20-78).

U.S. SENATE

Five Senate Democrats, including one presidential hopeful, scored 100 percent, as did one Independent lawmaker. Sixteen other Democrats missed just one vote among the 34 se-

lected by the AFL-CIO.

In the Pacific Northwest, Democrats Ron Wyden of Oregon and Patty Murray of Washington led the way at 31-2 and 32-2 — or 94 percent, respectively. Washington Democrat Maria Cantwell scored 85 percent (28-5-1), and Oregon Republican Gordon Smith tallied 51.5 percent (17-16-1). Smith is up for re-election this year.

The top two GOP senators supporting labor issues — Sens. Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe of Maine — each voted in agreement with the AFL-CIO on 22 of the 34 votes it tallied (65 percent). Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) was just behind with a 20-14 mark.

It should be noted that many of Smith's "wrong" votes dealt with collective bargaining rights for workers. The most egregious to labor was his opposition to the Employee Free Choice Act. Labor's top priority legislation, the bill would have allowed for certification of a union when a majority of workers signed cards designating the union as their bargaining representative ("card check").

The legislation passed overwhelmingly in the House, and it had enough votes to pass in the Senate, but a Re-

publican filibuster meant backers would need 60 votes to shut it down and move to a vote on the bill. Smith was among the Republicans voting against cloture. He also would have voted against the bill.

Smith also voted against labor on several amendments giving airport screeners greater collective bargaining rights and whistleblower protections. In one key vote used in the interim scorecard, Smith and his fellow Republicans — under pressure from the Bush Administration — tried to kill a 9/11 Commission recommendation that simply restored the right of airport screeners to unionize. Republicans lost on a party-line vote in the Democratically-controlled Senate.

Smith again voted opposite labor on another Republican-led filibuster, this one blocking an increase in the federal minimum wage. The so-called "clean increase" again had enough votes to pass in the Senate, but it failed to get the 60 votes needed to end the filibuster.

Wyden, Murray and Cantwell (along with 30 other Democrats) picked up "wrong" votes on a cloture vote on an immigration reform bill. The AFL-CIO opposed S. 1639 because amendments had made it "too anti-worker." A Republican-led filibuster had the final bill bottled up on the Senate floor when a motion was made to invoke cloture (limit the debate). Thirty-three Democrats, including Wyden, Murray and Cantwell, voted "yes" to end the filibuster and

vote on the final immigration reform bill. The vote failed, the filibuster continued and the bill was effectively killed for the session.

Smith, Wyden and Cantwell also voted against the AFL-CIO's position on an amendment to the immigration reform bill that eliminated a new Y-visa guest worker program. The AFL-CIO wanted the Y visa out of the bill because it opened the door for employers to import up to 400,000 temp workers annually to perform permanent jobs throughout the United States. The amendment was rejected 31-64.

Smith and Cantwell added to their "wrong" votes by voting against another amendment to the immigration bill, this one seeking a sunset of the temporary guest worker visa program after five years. That amendment was rejected 48-49.

Front-runner presidential candidates Sen. Barack Obama (D-III) and Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.), voted 23-1-10 and 27-1-6, respectively, with labor. They both missed a large number of votes because they were out campaigning. The immigration cloture vote was their only blemish with the AFL-CIO.

Republican presidential hopeful Sen. John McCain of Arizona was 3-14-17. All of McCain's "right" votes had to do with the minimum wage hike.

The lowest-scoring "Democrat" was Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut. He voted in agreement with the

federation on 25 of the 34 votes.

The lowest-scoring Republican was Sen. Judd Gregg of New Hampshire, who voted in agreement with the AFL-CIO on only three of the 34 votes. Sen. Mike Crapo of Idaho was next, with four "right" votes.

(Editor's Note: Officially, Sen. Patty Murray has the best lifetime AFL-CIO COPE voting record in the Pacific Northwest at 89 percent (132-17). Maria Cantwell is next at 88 percent (73-10), followed by Ron Wyden at 87 percent (106-16) and Gordon Smith at 20 percent (23-90). Press Associates Inc. contributed to this report.)

Minimum Hourly Wage Rates as of Jan. 1, 2008

Oregon's minimum wage rate became \$7.95 per hour on Jan. 1, 2008. This is the fourth-highest state minimum wage rate in the nation. The national minimum wage rate rose to \$5.85 per hour on July 24, 2007 and will rise to \$6.55 per hour on July 24, 2008.

STATE	RATE
Washington	\$8.07
California	\$8.00
Massachusetts	\$8.00
Oregon	\$7.95
Vermont	\$7.68
Connecticut	\$7.65



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Laborers Union gets health insurance for seasonal crew

A newly-signed union contract contains a major breakthrough for several hundred City of Portland seasonal maintenance workers. Thanks to bargaining and behind-the-scenes political work by Laborers Local 483, the workers will now get health insurance coverage when they return to work for a second year at the City.

Portland may be the only city in the country to offer health benefits to seasonal employees, Local 483 Business Manager Richard Beetle and City of Portland Human Resources Director Yvonne Deckard told Portland City Council Jan. 9 — before the council voted to ratify the contract. The seasonal workers typically work less than half the year for the City. And the Bureau of Human Resources (BHR) couldn't find any insurer to offer a policy for such a group.

Beetle said it took one-on-one appeals to City Council members before BHR would relent; before, management negotiators had said it was impossible. Then Mayor Tom Potter said, basically, "make it happen" and BHR came up with a plan to self-insure.

"This shows that we do have a pro-

gressive council," Beetle said.

Seasonal maintenance workers are among the lowest-paid City workers, and bargain separately from other groups.

'Health care is a basic human need. But one that's not attainable to City employees earning seasonal worker wages without the assistance of the City.'

who were concerned about increased use of temporary, seasonal workers.

The City hires 250 to 300 seasonal workers in any given year, Beetle said. Most are hired in the spring and summer by the Bureau of Parks & Recreation to mow grass, pick up leaves, and clean restrooms. About 20 help with street maintenance at the Bureau of Maintenance. And about 10 do routine fire hydrant maintenance for the Water Bureau.

Typically, about half will return to work for the City again the following year.

The union has no objection to the City using such temps for work that is truly seasonal, Beetle said, but it

wants to take away economic incentives to use seasonals to do work that could be done by full-time, year-round employees. Bringing seasonals' wages and benefits closer to those permanent employees does that — and of course is also a tremendous boon to the seasonal workers themselves.

The new contract has a four-year term and is retroactive to July 1, 2007, when the old contract expired. Under the new contract, employees in their second year of work can register for health benefits starting May 2008, get insurance by July 1, and then remain insured for the duration of their employment that season. Workers pay 10 percent of the premium cost, which currently is \$460 a month for worker-only coverage, \$660 a month for a worker and a spouse, and \$1,080 for full-family coverage. Beetle said cost estimates to the city for insuring the group range from \$400,000 to \$1 million a year.

The new agreement also raises wages by the cost-of-living index, with a minimum of 2 percent a year and a maximum of 5 percent. The workers currently make between \$10 and \$11 an hour.

And the contract raises the boot allowance from \$50 to \$120, every other year. Giving a sense of what ne-

gotiations were like, Beetle said the City spent two months arguing over the boot allowance.

It's still a substandard contract in some respects, Beetle said. There's only a very limited grievance procedure, and unlike most union workers, the seasonals under this contract are an "at-will" workforce, meaning they can be fired for any cause or no cause.

The City also was able to lengthen the amount of time seasonals can work, thanks to a change to the City Charter that voters approved in May 2007. Previously they were limited to 860 hours in any calendar year, or about five months at 40 hours a week.

Now they'll be limited to 1,200 hours, about seven months. Local 483 opposed Measure 26-90, fearing it would open the door to greater use of temps. But the way it worked out, Beetle said, increasing the hour limit made offering health benefits more feasible.

"Health care is a basic human need," Beetle told council members Jan. 9, but one that's "not attainable to City employees earning seasonal worker wages without the assistance of the City."

The new contract won praise from commissioners and was approved by unanimous vote.



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Josephine Co. doesn't adhere to order to rehire 100 workers let go after strike

By DON LOVING
Oregon AFSCME

GRANTS PASS — Despite a strongly-worded order from the Oregon Employment Relations Board (ERB) last fall that Josephine County must rehire within 30 days about 100 former members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 3694, those former members remain outside the county's employment, and it appears likely the issue will land in court.

Oregon AFSCME Council 75 filed an unfair labor practice complaint against Josephine County alleging that the county had privatized over 100 mental health workers in retaliation for Local 3694's four-day strike in early 2006. The vast majority of Local 3694's bargaining team and strike activists worked for the Josephine County Mental Health Department.

ERB agreed with the union, and the Board's unprecedented order said the county had to rehire all those employees, make them whole for any lost wages and benefits, reimburse Council 75 for lost union dues and pay a \$1,000 civil penalty — the last being the maximum fine the ERB is allowed to levy under Oregon law.

The ERB order came with some wiggle-room, as it gave the two sides 30 days to negotiate a settlement outside the ERB decision. The union extended that deadline a second 30 days, which ended in late December. But

there's still no agreement.

"On the surface, we are still negotiating," said Oregon AFSCME Staff Representative Daniel Burdis. "But the pace of the process is frustratingly slow."

Burdis has truly lived this issue. He was the interim Local 3694 president and the bargaining chair during the strike. He was also a county mental health employee who would have been one of those privatized if not for taking over the Council 75 staff position in the Grants Pass field office.

Burdis and Oregon AFSCME Field Services Director Rick Henson have met with county officials a half dozen times or so. But Josephine County has made two legal moves. First, they've asked the ERB for a stay of the order. They've also filed an intent to appeal the ERB decision to the Oregon Court of Appeals.

"The county is dragging its feet, apparently hoping to buy time for a court decision," said Burdis. "We've agreed not to talk publicly about the specifics of the negotiations, but in general their position is that it's simply impossible to bring all the employees back, regardless of the ERB order. We agree that may be true for some former employees, but certainly not for all of them. So we have a couple of future dates set for meetings, but I'm guessing this will ultimately be resolved in court."

Labor attorney Barbara Diamond agrees with Burdis' assessment. Dia-

mond handled the legal work on the original ULP complaint, and she's currently working on the union's response to both the request for a stay and the court appeal.

"We probably shouldn't be surprised," Diamond said. "ERB asked the parties to try to come to an agreement, which is good in theory. But from a practical standpoint, when you have an employer that was — from our point of view — engaged in numerous illegal actions, it's not likely they're going to turn around 180 degrees just like that. The two parties are just at such different places."

Diamond expects a ruling from ERB on the stay request within two weeks. Should Josephine County not receive injunctive relief from ERB, they could make the same request to the courts.

Diamond will also ask the court to toss out an appeal from Options for Southern Oregon, Inc. to join the legal fray. Better known locally as "Options," it is a private, non-profit agency that most of the former county mental health employees now work for.

"It's very late in the game for Options to claim it's an interested party," Diamond said. "They didn't try to intervene earlier. From my perspective, they have no standing in this case."




(Editor's Note: Don Loving is the communications director of Oregon AFSCME Council 75.)

Local Motion

December 2007

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

Election results

Company	Date	Union	Location	Results:		
				Union	No Union	
American Medical Response						
12/17	Teamsters vs. SEIU		Portland	297	52	4
Unitus Community Credit Union (decertification)						
12/17	CWA Local 7901		Portland, Salem	31	31	
Columbia River People's Utility District						
12/24	IBEW Local 125		Deer Island	card check, unit of 24		

Representation petitions

Company	Union	Location	# of employees
Kaiser Foundation Health Plan (print, copy, mail center)			
	Service Employees International Union Local 49	Clackamas	10
Kaiser Foundation Health Plan (materials specialists)			
	Service Employees International Union Local 49	Clackamas	2

Bend manufacturer announces closure during IAM bargaining

BEND — Leaders of Woodworkers District Lodge W1 of the International Association of Machinists are perplexed by a decertification petition filed with the National Labor Relations Board by an employee at BEKO Membrane Technology.

Chuck Macrae, directing business representative of Lodge W1, said workers voted last June to join their union. The vote was 6-1.

BEKO, headquartered in Germany, opened an operation in Bend in 1996. Workers at the Bend facility make compressed air dryers.

Macrae said bargaining was moving

at a slow pace, when in October the company announced it was closing the facility and moving it to Georgia.

"We negotiated a closure agreement for the bargaining unit, and that was that," Macrae said.

On Nov. 29, a decertification petition was filed with the NLRB. The notice indicated that the petition was supported by at least 30 percent of the 12-person workforce.

"We received the decert notice, but we disclaimed the unit, because it is our understanding the company is moving," Macrae said.

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The USA, launched last July, is a joint venture between 21 unions and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP). One of the main goals of the two groups is to support the TRCP's long-standing dedication to guaranteeing access for hunters and anglers, conserving fish and wildlife habitat and increasing funding for conservation.

For more information on joining the Union Sportsmen's Alliance and on the bass boat giveaway, go online to www.unionsportsmen.org.

The drawing will be held April 4.

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END OF AN ERA?

The last commercial Freightliner branded truck rolled down the assembly line March 29, 2007. Now

the Freightliner name has disappeared from most of the company's buildings on Portland's Swan Island.



The truck manufacturing plant is now known as the Western Star Truck Manufacturing Plant, and the Freightliner Corporate Headquarters became Daimler Trucks North America LLC, as of Jan. 7, 2008. The truck plant is now producing Western Star brand trucks, and the Freightliner military vehicle. The Daimler name is replacing DaimlerChrysler as the name of the parent company. Workers in the truck plant are members of the Machinists, Teamsters, Painters and Service Employees.



ATU #757 members ready to strike AMR in Josephine County

GRANTS PASS — Emergency medical technicians and paramedics employed at American Medical Response (AMR) are preparing to go on strike Jan. 20 in Josephine County.

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757 represents a bargaining unit of 33 ambulance workers at AMR. On Jan. 7 they gave a 10-day notice to strike. They were ready to walk out at 8 a.m. Jan. 17, but that was pushed back 72 hours on Jan. 14 after AMR delivered some financial documents that the union had been seeking. AMR claims that it doesn't make a profit in Josephine County. The union doesn't buy it, and wanted to see proof.

"AMR stalled and stalled handing over any documents," said Local 757 President Jon Hunt. "When it finally got down to the wire (to strike), we got some more documents."

At press time, the union was still scouring the documents for information. In the meantime, they decided to delay the strike and, instead, meet with a federal mediator on Jan. 17. (The outcome of that mediation was not known at press time.) The new strike date is set for Jan. 20.

The union has been trying to bargain a new contract for nearly two years. Key issues in the dispute are wages and health insurance benefits. As it stands, some EMTs and paramedics at AMR make just a few cents above the state minimum wage of \$7.95 an hour. According to Hunt, EMTs are on call 24 hours a day, and the average work-week is 56 hours.

During negotiations AMR implemented the company's national health insurance plan and increased worker co-payments for premiums. It also gave workers a wage increase, although part of that was tied to the increase in the state minimum wage on Jan. 1.

Local 757 has filed an unfair labor practice complaint, which is pending.

"Our people are solid. I think the company realizes that," Hunt said. "Hopefully we can get something worked out on the 17th. If not, our people are ready to strike."

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Auto Mechanics 1005

Executive Board meets 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 13.

Members meet 10 a.m. Saturdays, Jan. 19 and Feb. 16. **ALL MEMBERS** are invited to shop stewards' training. Stewards must attend steward meeting to be compensated.

NOMINATIONS & ELECTION: Nominations for the position of Trustee will be at our regular meeting Jan. 19, 2008. Election will be Feb. 16, 2008 the same day as our regular meeting. The polls will open at 8 a.m. and close at 5 p.m.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING: There will be a Special Membership Meeting following our regular membership meeting Jan. 19, 2008. The purpose of this meeting will be to withdraw money from the emergency fund to help cover the cost of needed repairs to our Union Hall.

All meetings are at 3645 SE 32nd Ave., Portland. **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.

Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers 114

Executive Board meets 10 a.m. Tuesday, Jan. 22, in the meeting room, at 7931 NE Halsey, Suite 205, Portland

Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers 1

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

Carpenters 247

Executive Board meets 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 22, at the Carpenters Hall, 2205 N. Lombard, Portland.

Carpenters 1388

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

Carpenters 1715

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

Clark, Skamania & W. Klickitat Counties Labor Council

Delegates meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 24, preceded by an Executive Board meeting, at the ILWU Local 4 Hall, 1205 Ingalls St., Vancouver, Wash.

Columbia-Pacific Building Trades

Delegates meet 10 a.m. Tuesdays, Jan. 22 and Jan. 29, in Kirkland Union Manor II, 3535 SE 86th, Portland.

Electrical Workers 48

Marine Unit meets 5 p.m. Monday, Jan. 28. Residential Unit meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 13, Dispatch Lobby. General Membership Meeting, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 23.

Winter Hawks Member Appreciation Night first come, first-served, tickets are limited. Tickets will be distributed AFTER the Jan. 23 Union Meeting for Saturday, March 8 v. Seattle; starts 7 p.m. at the Memorial Coliseum, pre-game dinner available at 5 p.m.

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

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

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

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

Vancouver Unit meets 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 13, Shanahan's Pub 209 W McLoughlin Blvd. Vancouver. Electrical Women of Local 48 meet 6 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 15, at NIETC.

Executive Board meets 5 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 16, and 6:30 p.m. Feb. 6, in the Executive Boardroom.

Bylaws Committee meets 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 22, 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: No. 2162, Lee Hudson; No. 2163, Larry F.

Newton; No. 2164, Ernest H. Rude; and No. 2165, Frank A. Corallino.

Electrical Workers 280

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

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

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

Elevator Constructors 23

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

Exterior & Interior Specialists 2154

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

Fire Fighters 452

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

Fire Fighters 1660

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

Glass Workers 740

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

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

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

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

Iron Workers 29

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

Iron Workers Shopmen 516

Members meet 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 24, at 11620 NE Ainsworth Cir., #300, Portland.

Labor Roundtable of Southwest Washington

Delegates meet 8 a.m. Friday, Feb. 1, at Hometown Buffet, 7809-B Vancouver Plaza Dr., Vancouver, Wash.

Laborers 483

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

Laborers/Vancouver 335

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

Lane County Labor Council

Delegates meet 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 23, at 1116 South A St., Springfield.

Lane, Coos, Curry & Douglas Building Trades

Delegates meet at noon Wednesday, Jan. 23, at the Springfield Training Center, 2861 Pierce Pkwy., Springfield.

Linn-Benton-Lincoln Labor Council

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

Linoleum Layers 1236

Portland area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 24, at 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

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

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

Machinists 63

Executive Board meets 4 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 6. Members meet 10 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 9, 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. 13.

Regular membership meets 6 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 13.

Shop stewards' training session 9 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 19.

Meetings are at 3645 SE 32nd Ave., Portland.

Metal Trades Council

Delegates meet 5 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 22, at IBEW Local 48 Hall, 15937 NE Airport Way, Portland.

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

Molders 139

Members meet 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 21, preceded by a 6 p.m. Executive Board meeting at the Carpenters

Hall, 2205 N. Lombard, Portland.

Multnomah County Employees 88

Executive Board meets 6:15 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 6, at 6025 E. Burnside, Portland.

General membership meets 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 20, preceded by a 6 p.m. stewards' meeting, at 6025 E. Burnside, Portland.

Northwest Oregon Labor Council

Delegates meet 7 p.m. Monday, Jan. 28, at IBEW Local 48 Hall, 15937 NE Airport Way, Portland.

Painters & Drywall Finishers 10

Members meet 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 20, at 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., 2nd Floor, Portland. **PLEASE NOTE:** Receive a free T-shirt for attending the membership meetings. **FOR SALE,** spray coversalls for \$8 at Local 10's office.

Plasterers 82

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

Portland City & Metropolitan Employees 189

General membership meets 6:15 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 22.

Executive Board meets 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 12. Meetings are at 6025 E. Burnside Portland.

Roofers & Waterproofers 49

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

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

Salem Building & Construction Trades Council

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

Sheet Metal Workers 16

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

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

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

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

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

Sign Painters & Paint Makers 1094

Members meet 3:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 21, in the District Office, at 11105 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland.

Southern Oregon Central Labor Council

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

Southwestern Oregon Central Labor Council

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

Transit 757

Vancouver members meet 7 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 20, at the Laborers Hall, 2232 NE Andresen, Vancouver, WA.

Tillamook members meet 1:00 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 20, at the Odd Fellows Hall, next door to the Bay City Fire Hall in Bay City.

AMR Northwest Josephine County, LAMAR Advertising and Valley Transit- See your liaison officers.

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. 18, at 20210 SW Teton Ave., Tualatin.

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

Bend area members meet 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 22, at the Local 290 Training Center, 2161 SW First, Redmond.

Brookings area members meet 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 29, at Curry County Search and Rescue, 417 Railroad St., Brookings.

Coos Bay area members meet 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 22, at the Coos Bay Training Center, 2nd & Kruse.

Eugene area members meet 6:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 21, at the Eugene #290 Hall.

Klamath Falls area members meet 5 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 22, at 4816 S. 6th St., Klamath Falls.

Medford area members meet 6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 24, at 650A Industrial Cir., White City.

Roseburg area members meet 5 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 24, at the Roseburg Labor Temple, 742 SE Roberts.

Salem area members meet 6 p.m. Monday, Jan. 21, at 1810 Hawthorne Ave. NE, Salem.

The Dalles area members meet 6 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 22, at the United Steelworkers Local 9170 Union Hall.

Humboldt-Del Norte Co. area members meet 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 23, at the Eureka Training Center, 832 E St., Eureka, Calif.

USW1097

Members meet 6:45 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 6, preceded by a 5:45 p.m. Executive Board meeting, in the union office building, 91237 Old Mill Town Rd., Westport.

Apprenticeship Opening

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Applicants must be at least 17 years old. Must apply in person and have a copy of either a high school diploma or GED.

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RETIREE MEETING NOTICES

ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED

AMERICANS OREGON CHAPTER

Retirees meet 10 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 24, at Westmoreland Union Manor, 6404 SE 23rd Ave., Portland.

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

All retirees are welcome to attend.

CARPENTERS

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

ELECTRICAL WORKERS 48

Retirees, wives and friends meet 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 12, at Steamers Restaurant, 8303 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland. A brief business meeting and drawing will follow. Ample parking available. For further information and reservations, please call Vera Larson at 503 252-2296.

ELECTRICAL WORKERS 280

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

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

GLASS WORKERS 740

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

INSULATORS 36

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

MACHINISTS

Retired Machinists meet 10 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 6, at 3645 SE 32nd Ave., Portland, 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. 11, in the Northwest Oregon Labor Council board room, at 1125 SE Madison #100G, Portland.

OREGON AFSCME

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

TRANSIT 757

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

UNITED ASSOCIATION 290

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



Unions for Kids poker run gets a kick start

Lee Duncan (left) of IBEW Local 48 receives a check for \$5,000 from Mark Kenney, service manager of McKinstry Co., for the sixth annual Unions for Kids Motorcycle Poker Run scheduled for June 14. McKinstry, a unionized mechanical contractor with offices in Portland and Seattle, and the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters, are the first-ever title sponsors for the fund-raising event for Doernbecher Children's Hospital. In addition to registration fees for the poker run, money is raised through a raffle for a new Harley-Davidson. Tickets are now on sale at \$10 each for a chance to win a 2008 Dyna Low Rider FXDL 105th anniversary limited edition bike. Only 3,500 tickets will be sold. The organization also is challenging unions and contractors to help with a \$1,000 Club sponsorship. Unions for Kids is a non-profit organization comprised of members of unions and union contractors in the area. The group has raised \$71,000 for Doernbecher in just five years. For more information, call Duncan at 503-260-5905.

Unions help Share program

VANCOUVER — Several labor unions are helping Share, a non-profit organization that provides shelter, food and emergency services for people in Southwest Washington, through sponsorships at its fundraising events.

Share is holding a Mardi Gras Gala — the first of its four major fundraisers — Saturday, Feb. 2, from 5 to 11 p.m. at the Vancouver Hilton Hotel. The gala includes wine and hors d'oeuvres, a New Orleans-style dinner, casino-style gambling and silent and live auctions.

IBEW Local 48 and EC Electric are sponsoring the silent auction, and Laborers Local 296 is sponsoring a gaming table. Tickets are \$75.

On April 28, a "Share-A-Bowl" dinner fundraiser will feature saxophonist Patrick Lamb, who is a member of Musicians Local 99. IBEW Local 48's Washington Political Action Committee is helping sponsor the event.

For information on sponsoring a Share event, call Pam at 360-695-7658 ext. 309.

IRS fines FedEx \$319 million for independent contractor dodge

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) — An employer's continued efforts to misclassify workers as "independent contractors" and avoid paying Social Security taxes, Medicare, workers' compensation insurance and other benefits just got a \$319 million kick in the head.

That's how much the Internal Revenue Service fined FedEx in late December for misclassifying 15,000 of its FedEx Ground pickup and delivery drivers as "independent contractors." FedEx said it will appeal.

Besides the FedEx workers, other independent contractors who really aren't independent abound in the construction industry and among some service industries, such as advertising sales and messengers.

Teamsters President Jim Hoffa hailed the IRS ruling against "FedEx's illegal independent contractor scam."

The day before the IRS ruling, the Massachusetts attorney general also ruled that FedEx Ground illegally misclassified its drivers.

"It's 'game over'" for FedEx, Hoffa said.

The IRS found the problem of misclassified independent contractors is so pervasive that it created new Form 8919 for workers misclassified by their companies. The form, "Uncollected Social Security and Medicare Tax on Wages," will now be

used to figure and report the employee's share of uncollected Social Security and Medicare taxes due on their compensation," the agency explained on Dec. 20 — the day of its FedEx ruling. IRS did not say what it would do about the employer's share of those levies.

"Generally, a worker who receives a Form 1099 for services provided as an independent contractor must report the income on Schedule C and pay self-employment tax on the net profit," IRS explained. "However,

sometimes the worker is incorrectly treated as an independent contractor when they are actually an employee. When this happens, Form 8919 will be used beginning for tax year 2007 by workers who performed services for an employer but the employer did not withhold the worker's share of Social Security and Medicare taxes," the agency added.

Workers who have to file the form are those who receive letters from the IRS saying they're really employees and not independent contractors.

American Federation of Teachers, Oregon Electrical Association endorse Merkley

The Oregon State Association of Electrical Workers and the American Federation of Teachers-Oregon have endorsed State Rep. Jeff Merkley in the Democratic primary for U.S. Senate.

The Association of Electrical Workers and its affiliate local unions represent workers in inside electrical construction, telecommunications, broadcasting, electrical manufacturing and maintenance. "Jeff has been a champion for Oregon workers for nearly a decade in the Legislature," said IBEW Local 48 Business Manager Clif Davis. "He comes from a union family, so he understands the values of fair treatment and hard work."

AFT-Oregon encompasses 20 locals representing some 10,000 workers in K-12, community college and higher education in faculty and classified positions; and child care workers in both public and private sectors.

"Jeff has stood with us for better health care in Oregon, a more stable economy, and his critical role in directing the largest increase in higher education funding in Oregon in memory," said AFT-Oregon President Mark Schwebke.

Seven labor groups, including the Oregon AFL-CIO, have endorsed Merkley. The winner of the May primary will challenge Republican incumbent Gordon Smith.

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Labor returns to Memphis for Martin Luther King Jr. Day event

By JAMES PARKS
National AFL-CIO

In 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. told striking sanitation workers that we all are "tied together in a single garment of destiny. If one black person suffers, if one black person is down, we're all down. It is a crime for people to live in this rich nation and receive slave wages."

With studies showing that 45 percent of African Americans who were born in the late 1960s into middle-class families have fallen into the bottom 20 percent of income, more than 600 union and civil rights activists are gathering in Memphis this week to reaffirm their commitment to making King's dream a reality.

The annual AFL-CIO King Day celebration Jan. 17-21 in Memphis — the city where King died 40 years ago while helping striking sanitation worker — will focus on taking political action, helping workers form unions and building coalitions to ensure that King's dream becomes a reality.

"In 1961, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. told the AFL-CIO convention that

'when the Negro wins, labor wins,' and that is just as true now as it was then," said AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Arlene Holt Baker. "He warned us that the forces that fought against unions also tried to keep Negroes from voting and in poverty."

Holt Baker continued: "He said, 'Those who in the second half of the 19th century could not tolerate organized labor have had a rebirth of power and seek to regain the despotism of that era while retaining the wealth and privileges of the 20th century. Their target is labor, liberals and the Negro people.'"

Holt Baker said the big change is that the list of those most disdained by the ultraconservative right wing has only expanded. "It no longer includes just labor, liberals and the Negro — it now includes new immigrants of all races, young people, gays and lesbians and the working poor, who are disproportionately single mothers and people of color."

Holt Baker said it is those on that list "that we in the labor movement have aligned ourselves with in a coalition that will make possible the real-

ization of the dream we all share for the economic and social justice Dr. King lived and died for."

The activists will celebrate King's life by taking a look back at what the Memphis sanitation workers strike meant to working people and people of color. The 64-day strike ended with a union contract for some 1,300 members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 1733. The strike is credited with reviving a dormant union movement in Memphis and initiating a wave of public employee union organizing in other parts of the South.

The activists will hear about the strike and its impact from speakers including the Rev. Jesse Jackson, who was one of King's aides; the Rev. James Lawson, Vanderbilt University distinguished professor, who helped the sanitation workers; Michael Honey, author of *Going Down Jericho Road*, which chronicles events in the strike and King's assassination; and AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer Bill Lucy, who was a union organizer dur-



ing the strike.

On Friday, Jan. 18, Lucy will lead a special roundtable discussion with veterans of the strike, including members of the clergy, community organizers and sanitation workers.

But the conference will not just look back — the participants will look forward to find ways to bolster the movement for economic and social justice. An entire afternoon of the conference will be devoted to political education and training.

Ronald Walters, a political analyst and professor at the University of Maryland, will discuss the importance of the 2008 elections for people of

color, and AFL-CIO Political Director Karen Ackerman will address how workers can win in 2008. Participants also will spend almost four hours Friday afternoon in get-out-the vote training sessions.

The weekend will be devoted to community service projects designed to serving the community that King worked to help — the poor and disadvantaged. AFL-CIO President John Sweeney will present a computer lab paid for by union members to a local elementary school, and AFSCME and the Transport Workers will make contributions to schools and the Head Start program.

IN MEMORIAM

Gary Thrasher, a former president of Graphic Communications International Union Local 43, passed away Dec. 22 of cancer. He was 58.

Thrasher grew up in Southeast Portland, where he attended Washington High School and Portland Community College. He entered the field of commercial printing in 1972 and worked as a journeyman press operator and pressroom foreman for 35 years.

A member of the Choctaw Nation, Thrasher served as Local 43's president for 10 years. He was a volunteer bell-ringer for Salvation Army and volunteer for the Oregon Peace Institute.

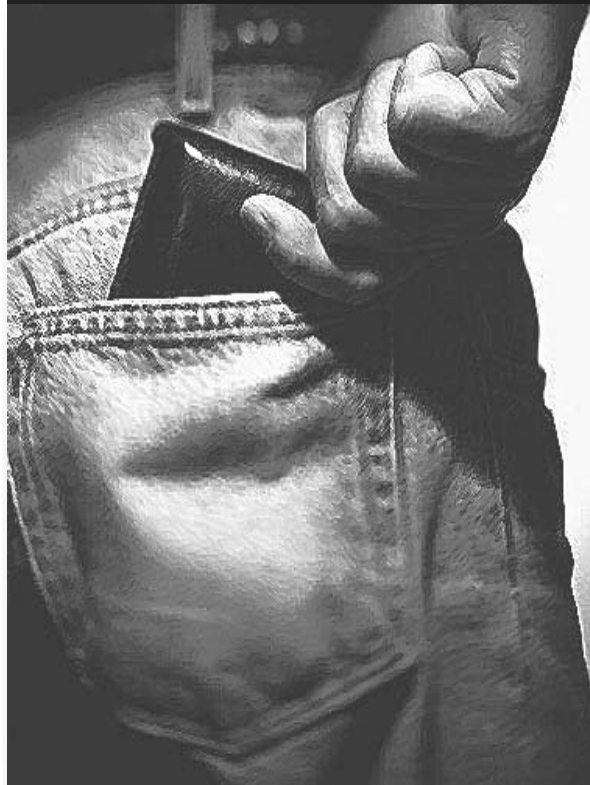
He is survived by his wife, Suzanne; daughter, Keely LeDoux; stepdaughters, Randi Adai and Mikki Adair-Berens; son, Tyler; brothers, Harold and Darrell; and five grandchildren. Remembrances can be sent to Mercy Corp.

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...Public hearing on I-5 Bridge options Jan. 22

(From Page 1)

and reduce congestion, on-ramps and off-ramps would be widened and lengthened at six interchanges: SR 500, Mill Plain Boulevard, SR 14, Hayden Island, Marine Drive, and Columbia Boulevard.

It would be the biggest Portland-area public construction project in a generation. Early estimates say the project would take five years to construct and would cost \$3.1 to \$4.2 billion.

State transportation planners are hoping the federal government will pick up 60 percent or more of the total cost, with the remainder to come from state and local government budgets, and revenues from a high-tech toll system. Union officials say, realistically, the federal government likely will pick up between 25 to 30 percent of the cost.

While the project's price tag is enormous, federal, state and local leaders say that doing nothing is an unacceptable option.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary Peters, U.S. Deputy Transportation Secretary Thomas Barrett and Federal Highway Administrator J. Richard Capka toured the I-5 Bridge and the area surrounding it last year.

"Something obviously needs to be done. It is important to get the new bridge built," Peters said during her visit in October.

Columbia River Crossing staff have shown a preference for a replacement bridge with light rail, but the task force hasn't ruled out several other alternatives. Two proposals would keep the existing bridge and build a smaller new bridge as a supplement. That might save \$170 million to \$590 million in

the short run, but wouldn't solve many of the problems of the old bridge, and would make maritime shipping more hazardous. And one proposal would include the new bridge but have a dedicated lane for buses rather than light rail.

Vancouver Mayor Royce Pollard and Oregon Congressman Earl Blumenauer have said they oppose any option that doesn't include light rail.

Finally, some members of the public oppose any bridge improvement at all, arguing that reducing congestion will make it easier to drive, which is bad for the environment.

Local building trades union officials, however, are solidly in support of the new bridge with light rail alternative.

The project would require payment of prevailing wage rates, leaving union-

signatory contractors in a good position to bid on the work. Thus the project would mean years of employment for hundreds of union building trades workers in Oregon and Southwest Washington.

Dave Tischer, business manager for Laborers Local 320 and a member of the task force representing the Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council, is encouraging union members — especially those whose commute takes them across the Interstate Bridge — to come out to the task force's Jan. 22 public meeting to show support for the project. At the meeting, which takes place from 4 to 8 p.m. at the Vancouver Hilton, task force members will also hear a presentation about tolling.

Tolls paid for both phases of the existing bridge. The first toll, five cents,

was levied from 1917 to 1929. The second, 20 cents for cars and more for trucks, was levied from 1960 to 1966. It's not clear how much the toll would have to be now, but it will be more than 20 cents. Fortunately, new electronic tolling technologies exist that would enable drivers to pay a toll without slowing or stopping.

The Columbia River Crossing Task Force is expected to finalize its recommendation by August, at which point WSDOT, ODOT, and local governments and transit agencies will have a chance to formally endorse the project, which would then seek federal funding from several sources. Contracts could go out for bid as early as late 2009, and construction could begin as early as 2010, though 2011 is a more likely start date.

I-5 Bridge can't handle traffic

The existing I-5 bridge actually consists of two side-by-side three-lane bridges, completed in 1917 and 1958. They're just too small to handle the existing demand — 135,000 vehicles a day, a number which includes 10,000 to 30,000 trucks. On weekdays, traffic congestion — defined as traffic moving 30 miles per hour or less — averages six hours a day.

On- and off-ramps in the project area are shorter than usual, and the bridge's 11-foot-wide lanes are a foot smaller than standard. As a result, accidents along the five-mile stretch are twice as frequent as on comparable stretches of highway. And because it has no safety shoulders, accidents on the bridge back up traffic for up to an hour. The bridge is also too low for tug boats to pass when the river level is high, so a lift span in the center must be raised an average of once a day for river traffic. The lift span takes 10 minutes to go up and down, and it too can lead to hour-long traffic backups.

All told, the five-mile span between State Route 500 in Vancouver and Columbia Boulevard in Portland is the worst congestion bottleneck of any stretch on I-5 — a 1,381-mile-long highway that runs from the Canadian border to Tijuana. Congestion has a major impact on commuters, and makes freight commerce more costly; regionwide, trucking companies time the shipment of goods to avoid being on I-5 in Portland during rush hour.

Lastly, the existing bridge is not up to modern seismic standards, and would likely collapse in the event of a major earthquake. The eastern span — the one built in 1917 that now carries north-bound traffic — is held in the river by 60-foot wooden pilings made of Douglas fir.

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UNITE HERE, Plumbers and Fitters Union, endorse Obama for president

The Plumbers and Pipe Fitters Union (UA) and UNITE HERE have endorsed Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) in the 2008 presidential primary race.

The UA is the first national union from the AFL-CIO to back Obama, who won the Iowa caucuses earlier this month and came in a close second in last week's New Hampshire primary. The UA represents 340,000 members.

UNITE HERE is the first national union from the Change to Win labor federation to endorse Obama. The union represents 450,000 hotel, restaurant, laundry, culinary and apparel workers.

"Our organization and our members will do everything in our power to see that Barack Obama reaches the White House this fall, because we know he will bring working Ameri-

cans with him," said UNITE HERE General President Bruce Raynor.

UA President William Hite said Obama "has always fought for working people throughout his career and will do the best job of bringing badly needed change to Washington."

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.), who narrowly won the New Hampshire primary, has been endorsed by 12 AFL-CIO unions, including AFSCME, the American Federation of Teachers, the Amalgamated Transit Union, the Bricklayers, the Letter Carriers, the Machinists, the Office and Professional Employees, the Painters and Allied Trades, the Sheet Metal Workers, the Theatrical Stage Employees, and the United Transportation Union.

IAM's endorsement of Clinton in the Democratic primaries was accom-

panied by an endorsement of former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee in the Republican primaries. Huckabee won the Iowa caucuses.

Three national AFL-CIO unions are supporting former Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C.) in the Democratic primaries. They are the Mine Workers, Transport Workers and United Steelworkers. The Carpenters Union, an affiliate of Change to Win, also has endorsed Edwards.

Neither the AFL-CIO or Change to Win federation has made an endorsement for the primaries.

LERC 30th anniversary party slated

The Labor Education and Research Center of the University of Oregon is planning a 30th anniversary celebration Friday, March 30, at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland.

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

A reception and dinner are scheduled for 6 to 9 p.m. Preceding the dinner, from 2 to 5 p.m., will be a symposium entitled, "Creating Labor-Community Alliances That Work."

At the evening celebration LERC also will launch its new Strategic Training and Action Research (STAR) Fund. Net proceeds from the event will benefit the fund, which was started through an estate gift from Robert and Cloydene Uhrbrand. The fund will be used in part to provide more training programs and to bring visiting union leaders to Oregon.

LERC's hopes to raise \$30,000 at the anniversary dinner. Donations to the STAR Fund are tax deductible and range from \$100 to \$5,000. A \$5,000 "Visionary" contribution includes 16 anniversary dinner tickets and recognition in the dinner program. A \$100 "Activist" contribution includes a dinner ticket and recognition in the dinner program. Dinner tickets are \$60 each.

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

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Budget and staff cuts – The real Social Security crisis

By STEVE KOFAHL

The first members of the huge Baby Boom generation are beginning to file applications for Social Security retirement benefits. Those not old enough to apply for retirement are in their disability-prone years, and record numbers of them are seeking disability benefits. Unfortunately, impacted by these growing workloads, the Social Security Administration (SSA) is being starved of funding and, thereby, denied the front-line employees needed to provide the quality service that American workers have paid for and deserve. Applicants and taxpayers — present and future — are being seriously harmed as payments are delayed.

SSA employees who retire are not being replaced, and the agency is on track to lose 6,000 positions in just the past two years.

Staffing will soon drop to its lowest level since 1972, in the face of rapidly-expanding workloads. More field offices are being closed and hours of operation are being reduced in others. Field representatives responsible for community outreach have all but disappeared, and the agency is steering benefit applicants toward Internet self-service. Many older and disabled individuals who attempt to file for benefits online are disadvantaged, and even lose benefits they are due because they do not understand complex SSA rules.

More agency functions are being outsourced to entities that are not held accountable.

The greatest hardships are suffered by applicants for disability benefits. Almost two-thirds of initial claims are denied, but almost two-thirds of those who request a hearing before an administrative law judge are ultimately approved.

Nationally, there are about 577,000 initial claims pending, plus 746,000 hearing requests. About 84,000 of the hearing requests have been filed by veterans. Hearing request backlogs have more than doubled in the last seven years. An applicant approved for benefits after a hearing will have waited about two years on average from the date of filing a claim before finally receiving benefits, with 496 of these days spent waiting for a hearing. This clearly is unacceptable. Too many applicants lose their life savings, their homes, and their families while they wait. Some die before their claims are finally approved.

Service deterioration is not limited to the disabil-

ity programs run by SSA. It is getting much more difficult to get through on the agency's toll-free number, and more than half of the callers to SSA field offices get a busy signal.

Continuing disability reviews that save taxpayers over \$10 for every \$1 invested have been cut back severely, as have Supplemental Security Income eligibility reviews, which save \$7 for every \$1 spent to do them. This is penny-wise and pound foolish, and harms taxpayers of all ages.

Social Security will collect \$189 billion more than it will pay out in benefits this year, and some of the money collected will be used to fund program administration, so why isn't there enough money available to properly run the programs? The reason is that the agency's annual administrative budget must be authorized as part of the Labor-HHS-Education-Independent Agencies spending bill.

SSA has been struggling to function under a Continuing Resolution, which limits spending to the levels that have been in place for each of the last two fiscal years.

In late 2006, SSA Commissioner JoAnne Barnhart requested \$10.44 billion from President Bush for the fiscal year that began Oct. 1, 2007, and asked to serve another 6-year term. In January 2007, Bush proposed to spend \$9.597 billion for SSA in his budget proposal, knowing that limiting spending to that level would greatly accelerate service deterioration. And he nominated Michael Astrue as commissioner to replace Barnhart. House and Senate budget committees raised the amount for SSA to about \$10.1 billion last spring. The House Appropriations Committee slashed the amount to \$9.697 billion, and Senate Appropriations to \$9.872 billion, in late summer. Before sending the Labor-HHS authorization bill to the president, the Senate raised it to \$9.918 billion, and the bill passed the Senate easily. The 435-member House passed it as well, and was within two votes of the two-thirds majority needed to override a veto. The president vetoed the bill, trying to present himself as a born-again fiscal conservative (domestic programs only), and he threatened to veto all of the other domestic spending bills.

Congress largely acceded to his demands, cut spending levels, added war funding with no strings attached, and placed all 11 bills in an omnibus package. SSA was left with \$ 9.747 billion, which is \$693 million less than what Barnhart said she

needed, and just \$150 million more than what the president proposed.

Though it is an improvement over the Continuing Resolution, and the first year that Congress exceeded Bush's budget request, it is woefully inadequate, and service will continue to decline. The president is expected to sign the bill.

The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) and other organizations that care about SSA are already lobbying for an adequate SSA budget for next year. We have not yet heard what Commissioner Astrue has requested, or what Bush will propose in 2008, but we are not waiting. Several senators from both political parties have already asked the White House Office of Management and Budget to support \$11 billion.

The American Customer Satisfaction Index released Dec. 17, 2007, reveals that SSA's score has fallen from 84 percent to 72 percent since 2000. The man selected president that year has so far failed to privatize Social Security, but he and the Congresses since then have managed to cripple, dismantle, and discredit the agency and its workforce.

Seniors, the disabled, survivors and dependents of workers, taxpayers, and their children and children deserve better. They should demand change now, and in November.

(Editor's Note: Steve Kofahl is president of the American Federation of Government Employees Local 3937. An affiliate of the AFL-CIO, the union represents Social Security Administration employees in Oregon, Washington, Alaska and Idaho.)

Thanks to unions, 'Presents from Partners' best ever

To the Editor:

This letter comes with deepest thanks for labor's compassionate support of the 2007 "Presents from Partners" toy drive.

You joined hands with 30 other organizations in an unprecedented outpouring of kindness and generosity on behalf of kids in need. As a result, nearly 1,700 toys were distributed to 574 underprivileged children this past December. Those numbers exceed last year's record highs by nearly 40 percent!

In partnership with the Northwest Oregon Labor Council and Saturn of Beaverton, we held our 11th annual holiday toy distribution party at the Genesis Community Fellowship in Northeast Portland on Dec. 20. Each of the 354 children in attendance received three new toys, a picture with Santa, along with the gift of recognition, delight and a positive memory to last a lifetime — all because you cared.

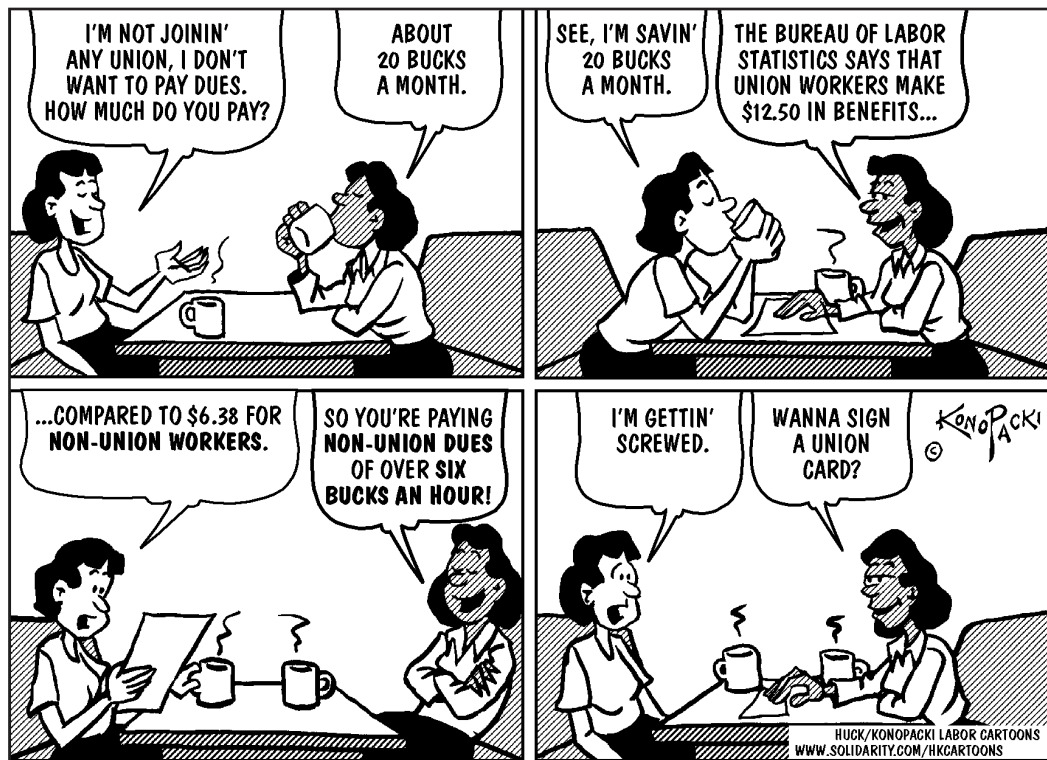
Your generosity also helped distribute gifts to an additional 220 children who are homeless or whose families are among the working poor.

Children First for Oregon reports that 16.8 percent of Oregon's children lived in poverty in 2007. That number is up 15 percent from 2006. While this obviously growing need is discouraging, it is uplifting to see such an abundant, genuine display of care and concern for those less fortunate. Your generosity helped us provide more outreach than ever before.

On behalf of all the children and their families, my heartfelt thanks and gratitude for making the 2007 "Presents from Partners" toy drive and distribution an unparalleled success.

Glenn Shuck
Executive Director
Labor's Community
Service Agency
Portland

Wally Mehrens
UA Local 290
Retired
Clackamas



Labor must ramp up efforts to combat global warming

By DON McINTOSH
Associate Editor

Barbara Byrd may soon be attending your union meeting to deliver an urgent message.

Byrd, secretary-treasurer of the Oregon AFL-CIO, is the Portland coordinator for the Labor Education and Research Center (LERC) of the University of Oregon's. She spent Dec. 3-14 in Bali, Indonesia, as an official observer at a United Nations climate change summit.

Byrd returned to Oregon evangelized: Global warming is real, and the union movement needs to step up and show leadership by helping to craft the world's response to it.

"The need to really ramp up labor's engagement is so clear to me now in a way it never was before," Byrd told the NW Labor Press. "We need to be there to talk about protections for workers who might lose their jobs, and about creating new jobs that are good jobs. We [in labor] bring a moral dimension to this discussion, having to do with equity — who loses and who benefits in dealing with climate change."

There's no time to waste, Byrd said. The scientific case, by now, is overwhelming. Even the Bush Administration has acknowledged that global warming is happening. At the Bali summit, the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) presented its most recent conclusions after reviewing hundreds of studies. Global evidence of a warming trend is unequivocal, the IPCC reported, from increases in average air and ocean temperatures to widespread melting of snow and ice to rising average sea levels. And human activity, the IPCC concluded, is the driving force contributing to the warming.

In Bali, Byrd met foreign trade unionists who told her that global warming's impacts are already here.



Pictured above is most of the U.S. contingent to the United Nations Dec. 3-14 summit on climate change in Bali, Indonesia. Oregon AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer Barbara Byrd is in the middle row at the far right. In front of her is Bob Baugh, executive director of the Industrial Union Council of the national AFL-CIO. Others pictured include union leaders from the United Mine Workers, Boilermakers, Service Employees, Communications Workers, and Steel Workers, plus Sean Sweeney of the Cornell University Global Labor Institute.

Agricultural land is turning into desert. Floods are uprooting communities. Massive forest fires are destroying people's livelihoods. And disappearing Arctic ice is disrupting fishing industries.

"The folks I met from Malaysia and South Africa and Argentina and Brazil, they're not sheltered from the impact," Byrd said. "They're experiencing it big time. We haven't felt it because we're a rich country and can adapt. But we will."

Fortunately, according to the IPCC report, humanity already has tech-

nologies to combat global warming. The Bali meeting was the kickoff of a new round of negotiations over the international response to global warming. The negotiations are supposed to produce a successor agreement to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012. Under the Kyoto Protocol, 36 of the world's rich countries committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while 137 poor countries committed to monitor and report emissions. The United States and Kazakhstan are the only countries not to have ratified the Kyoto agreement.

The negotiations begun at Bali are expected to be concluded next year at a meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark. According to the road map agreed to in Bali, poor nations would also commit to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the new agreement, and rich nations would help them do so with aid, investment, and transfer of new technologies.

The Bali meeting was the first time the world's trade union movement has had a role in climate talks: The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) was given status as an offi-

cial observer, and brought 90 trade unionists from 25 countries.

Byrd was part of the 20-member U.S. contingent, which was led by Bob Baugh, a former Oregon AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer. Baugh now is executive director of the national AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Council, and chair of the labor federation's one-year-old Energy Task Force.

As observers, Byrd and other trade unionists met with official government delegates to lobby for workers to be protected when actions are taken to halt global warming, a principle ITUC outlined in a "Green Jobs" white paper.

Back from Bali, Byrd is working on a presentation to take around to local unions. Byrd said she wants to make sure organized labor is part of state and regional discussions on how to respond to global warming. At its 2007 convention, the Oregon AFL-CIO passed a resolution to create a blue ribbon committee to study how the state labor federation can best contribute to the fight against climate change. Byrd wants labor to be at the table this year when state lawmakers discuss global warming legislation to be introduced at the 2009 Oregon Legislature. Oregon is one of six western states (and two Canadian provinces) taking part in the Western Climate Initiative, an effort to develop a regional response to global warming. If there are state and local government subsidies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, Byrd wants to make sure they favor employment of local workers, and require payment a living wage.

"There are [green] jobs being created as we speak," Byrd said. "They are not necessarily good jobs. We need to make sure they are good jobs. And then we need to go out and organize them."

More than 3 million seniors will fall into donut hole in 2008

By JAMES PARKS
NATIONAL AFL-CIO

This will not be a happy New Year for millions of seniors. More seniors than ever are expected to fall into the Medicare Part D donut hole in 2008, the coverage gap that requires seniors to pay the full cost of their prescription drugs, according to the Alliance for Retired Americans.

Under the Medicare Part D rules pushed by the Bush Administration and passed by Congress in 2003, seniors are on the hook for prescription expenses between the annual amounts of \$2,510 and \$5,726 in 2008. This gap of more than \$3,200 has been dubbed the "donut hole." The total costs for seniors in the donut hole, when you add in deductibles and co-pays, will hit \$4,050, about \$200 more than in 2007,

the Alliance says.

More than 3 million of the 24 million Part D enrollees will have to pay the \$4,050 in out-of-pocket expenses before Medicare kicks back in and provides catastrophic-care coverage, paying 95 percent of those prescription costs. But, even if they don't fall into the donut hole, seniors are paying nearly 25 percent more in premiums for their 2008 Medicare Part D prescription coverage than they did in 2007, according to a report by the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR).

Edward Coyle, executive director of the Alliance, sums up the situation facing seniors: "Between rising premiums, fewer prescriptions being covered and the growing donut hole, seniors will pay more for their drugs on every front next year."

The CEPR study, "Changes in the Cost of Medicare Prescription Drug Plans, 2007-2008" suggests the increased premium costs may be the result of insurers offering low introductory premiums when the program began in January 2006 to attract seniors and later springing the higher costs on participants.

The average Part D premium increase will drive costs up for the average single participant by \$57.70 a year to \$293; for the average couple, the annual premium jumps from \$470.60 a year to \$586.

The study warns: "If this rate of increase is sustained for any substantial period of time, then it will have a noticeable impact on living standards."

In August, the AFL-CIO noted that seniors in the Part D program are more likely to pay at

least \$300 a month for medicines than those in other plans, according to a study published by the journal, Health Affairs.

Medicare Part D is a voluntary prescription drug program, and its benefits are provided only through private plans, either stand-alone prescription drug plans or Medicare Advantage plans. Congress passed the Medicare drug legislation by a slim margin — and several lawmakers likely would not have voted for the bill had they been told the true cost, the AFL-CIO said.

While the Bush Administration claimed the legislation would cost \$400 million over 10 years, Congress learned that Medicare's chief actuary had estimated the true cost of the program at \$534 billion.