

...Is a third labor federation in the works?

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agreement to allow all unions to apply for Solidarity Charters.

"It is ludicrous to think that Change to Win would have entered an agreement on the Solidarity Charter program that would exclude any of our affiliates," CTW Chairwoman Anna Burger wrote in a memo to all AFL-CIO organizations.

Burger said CTW unions would suspend per-capita payments if Sweeney didn't rescind the eligibility rules.

Oregon's largest central labor council, the Portland-based Northwest Oregon Labor Council, passed a resolution in March opposing the restrictions. The labor council sent a letter to Sweeney asking that he rescind the restrictions.

In response to Burger's memo, Sweeney told AFL-CIO union officials he was "determined to resolve the outstanding issues regarding Solidarity Charters. One of those issues, he said, includes payment of a national "fair share solidarity fee" by the disaffiliated unions. "Misrepresentations and reckless threats to hold the state federations and central labor councils financially hostage do not advance our goal of unity and strength," Sweeney wrote.

In March, Associated Press reported that the five breakaway unions had paid the AFL-CIO \$9.9 million in unpaid per-capita taxes prior to their disaffiliation. All of the unions except SEIU set-

led up in early January, with UFCW paying \$3.7 million, the Teamsters paying \$2.8 million and UNITE HERE paying \$180,000.

The AFL-CIO filed a lawsuit against SEIU seeking \$10 million in back per capita taxes. In March, the sides settled on a payment of \$3.9 million.

Talk of a Third Labor Federation

As the May 1 deadline neared, several newspapers reported an exchange of letters between Sweeney and Burger in which Burger proposed creating a third labor federation — the "Alliance for Worker Justice."

In an April 26 statement, Burger said she had not proposed a third federation, but rather "a structure that would enable all organizations supporting a workers' rights movement — the AFL-CIO, Change To Win, and organizations not affiliated with either — to work together on issues of common concern.

"It would enable us to bring the best of all of our organizations together at critical times. It also recognizes our differences and would enable us to implement our different strategies," she added.

Burger said the new structure CTW seeks "deals with the reality that the Solidarity Charter program is legally and structurally insufficient to developing true permanent national and local cooperation between Change To Win, the

AFL-CIO, and other non-aligned labor organizations."

Sweeney rejected CTW's new structure idea. "The last thing we can imagine doing less than a year after (the dis-

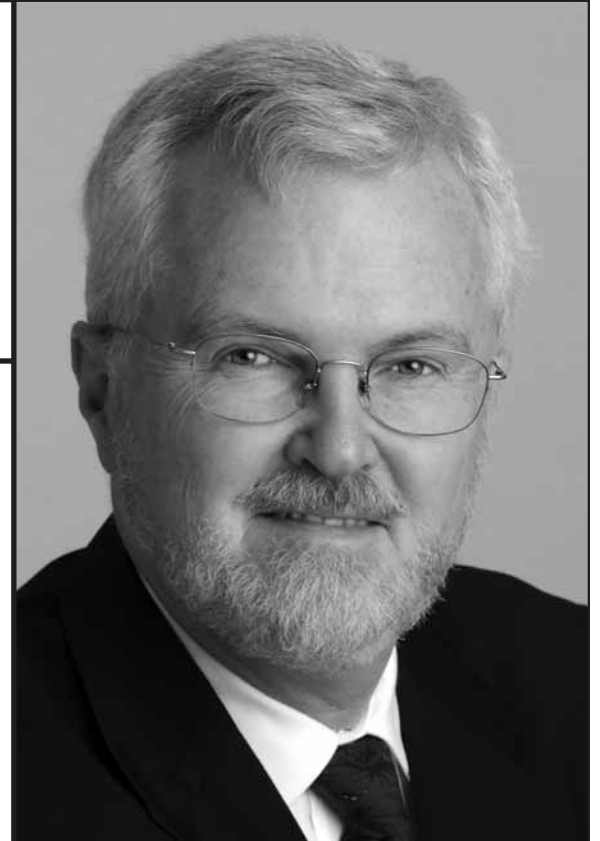
affiliation) is investing time and resources into co-founding yet a third labor federation, with all the bureaucracy, expense and additional staffing that would entail," he said.

Oregon AFL-CIO President Chamberlain said that despite the setback at the national level, "we'll continue working with Change to Win unions in areas of common interest."

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