

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Single-payer health care plan backed by Washington AFL-CIO

WENATCHEE, Wash. — Delegates representing affiliated unions of the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, voted at its convention last month to endorse U.S. House Resolution 676, "Expanded and Improved Medicare for All," which would institute a single-payer health care system in the United States by expanding an improved Medicare system to every resident.

The WSLC joins six other AFL-CIO state federations (Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Ohio, Delaware and North Dakota) and 39 central labor councils in endorsing the legislation.

Introduced by Rep. John Conyers (D-MI), HR 676 would cover every person in the United States for all necessary medical care including prescription drugs, hospital, surgical, outpatient services, primary and preventive care, emergency services, dental, mental health, home health, physical therapy, rehabilitation, vision care, chiropractic and long-term care.

HR 676 would end deductibles and co-payments and, according to supporters, would save billions annually by eliminating the high overhead and profits of the private health insurance industry and HMOs.

Under the resolution, the Washington state labor federation "will work with their affiliates and community groups to support action for a single-payer universal health care plan and HR 676 until we make what is morally right for our nation into what is also politically possible... (and) encourage other members of the House to sign on as co-sponsors, and to encourage Senators to introduce a companion bill in the Senate."

HR 676 has 75 congressional co-sponsors, including Rep. Jim McDermott (D-Wash.).

PDC workshop Sept. 20 will look at construction wages

The Portland Development Commission has scheduled three work sessions over the next three months to discuss wages on construction projects that it helps finance.

The meetings will be held from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. in the PDC conference room at 222 NW Fifth Ave., Portland, on Wednesday, Sept. 20; Wednesday, Oct. 18. and Tuesday, Nov. 7.

The purpose of the Sept. 20 session will be to provide the PDC Board and the public with an understanding of the rules and regulations of the federal Davis-Bacon Act and the Oregon prevailing wage rate law. The agenda will include presentations by PDC staff and state Labor Commissioner Dan Gardner. There will be no public testimony.

The format for the following two workshops will involve panel discussions with invited representatives of large and small and minority contracting firms, commercial and residential developers, labor and other jurisdictions.

"Our intention is for these sessions to put the PDC Board in the position of making an informed decision on whether and what types of requirements PDC should consider for projects which are not clearly subject to federal or local wage laws," said Board chairman Mark Rosenbaum.

The quasi-independent development arm of the Portland City Council has been under fire from city commissioners, the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries and building trades unions for circumventing state prevailing wage laws on some of its public-private development projects.

Labor relations group slates Oct. 6 diversity workshop

The Oregon Chapter of the Labor and Employment Relations Association (LERA) will hold a workshop on diversity on Friday, Oct. 6, from 7:30



Wal-Mart tour bus rolls into Oregon

The "Change Wal-Mart, Change America" tour bus rolled into North Portland Sept. 2 for a rally and barbecue. Portland City Commissioner Sam Adams (above) was among a group of 75 people adding their names to the "Better America" pledge, which asks Wal-Mart to be a better corporate citizen. The bus was on the last leg of a 35-day, 19-state campaign that started Aug. 1 in New York. The colorful red, white and blue "Smiley" bus stopped at the Oregon State Fair in Salem on Sept. 1, where in a few hours several hundred Oregonians signed the pledge card. According to its own reports, Wal-Mart covers only 43 percent of its 1.39 million U.S. employees with health insurance. "It is the taxpayer who has to pick up the tab (for the others), and therefore is subsidizing Wal-Mart," said Chris Kufinis of Wake Up Wal-Mart, sponsor of the bus tour. It's estimated that taxpayers last year subsidized Wal-Mart — which had a net income of \$10.5 billion — more than \$8 million in Oregon and more than \$18 million in Washington. The retail giant says that its average full-time (30 hours a week) "associate" earns \$10.11 an hour. Kufinis says it's closer to \$7.90. Either way, it's not enough for a family of two to meet basic living needs. He added that Wal-Mart's business practices and growing trade with China also have forced American manufacturing jobs to shut down and move overseas. After Portland, the bus motored to its final destination in Seattle for a Labor Day event with U.S. Senators Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray that drew a crowd of 400. Along the way, it stopped in Vancouver to meet with a local group fighting to keep a Wal-Mart out of their community. During the tour, more than 25,000 citizens signed Wake Up Wal-Mart pledge cards.

a.m. to 9:30 a.m. at the Century Hotel, 8185 SW Tualatin-Sherwood Road, Tualatin.

"The Diversity Movement and Labor Relations: What's the Connection" will look at multiculturalism and how it relates to the changing workforce and labor relations.

Registration is \$20 for LERA members and \$30 for non-members. Annual membership to the group is \$25.

For more information, contact Bill Greer at 503-957-2255 or e-mail him at wmgreer@msn.com.

Machinists, Teamsters end ULP strike at Cummins NW

Machinists and Teamsters at Cummins NW plants in Portland, Pendleton, Renton, Wash., and Spokane, Wash., ended an unfair labor practice strike Aug. 28.

Cummins NW employs 23 Machinists, members of Lodge 1005, at the Portland facility on Swan Island.

Workers at all the unionized plants walked out July 7 after the new owner voided all contracts with the Machinists and Teamsters unions. Before negotiations even began on a successor contract, the new owner quit paying into the workers' union pension fund.

Unfair labor practice charges were filed and workers from both unions struck a short time later.

At the bargaining table, the new owner has not moved off demands for open-shop language and implementation of a 401(k) pension plan to replace the union plan.

The company had asked the unions to sign a strike settlement proposal that would have voided the charges at their last bargaining session Aug. 28.

"We would not do that as a condition of the contract," said Scott Lucy, a business representative of Portland Machinists District Lodge 24.

"The ULP charges are still being investigated. We're going to see that through the process," he said.

If the ULP charges are upheld by the National Labor Relations Board, striking union members could receive back pay for the time they were out on strike.

No future bargaining has been scheduled, but Lucy said his union is ready to talk at any time.

Korean War Veterans

organization is looking for new members. The group meets the 4th Tuesday each month (September 26), at noon at Milwaukie Elks Lodge, 13121 SE McLoughlin Blvd. For more information, call Max Loucks at 503-286-1464



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