

# Fire Fighters launch Union Sportsmen's Alliance

SEATTLE (PAI) — Carrying out a plan that International Association of Fire Fighters President Harold Schaitberger first floated three years ago, the union has joined other labor and conservation groups to create the new Union Sportsmen's Alliance.

Unveiled in Seattle last month, the Alliance is an outgrowth of the existing Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership between 20 unions and conservation groups. But unlike the partnership, the new alliance will offer goods and services and its own clubs to unionists who like to hunt and fish.

Besides the Fire Fighters, key unions behind the new alliance include the Machinists, whose president, Thomas Buffenbarger, will be

on the group's board of directors.

"For many of our members, hunting and fishing isn't just what they do in their free time, they're part of who they are," said Schaitberger. "We're proud to offer a program to help our hard working men and women enjoy the activities they're passionate about."

The alliance's working papers say it will "create an outdoor hunting and fishing club exclusively for union members and their families with the purpose of actively engaging union sportsmen in the ongoing fight to create a better future for hunting and fishing while helping to create their own outdoor community that will extend union member benefits beyond the workplace, into the woods and

onto the water."

It will have its own dues structure, multimedia information program — including a publication — and program where unionists who hunt and fish can buy goods and gear at a discount through the alliance.

When Schaitberger first floated the idea before the 2004 presidential election, he noted "politics" as another reason for creating the Union Sportsmen's Alliance. That led him to try to get the AFL-CIO Executive Council to formally back creation of the club, but he did not succeed.

Schaitberger explained then that because many unionists hunt and fish, they got goods and gear — and a heavy dose of political propaganda — from the National Rifle Association and its American Rifleman magazine. That lobby is one of the most

powerful in the U.S. and it transmits a strong and bitter anti-union line.

The political angle is important, however, because the Fire Fighters Union is plurality Republican, and its hunter/fisher members — along with other union hunters and fishermen — can be swayed by the NRA.

Schaitberger did not mention politics in last month's announcement.

## Carpenters' Cobián gets more time in U.S.; fundraiser set

At a Feb. 13 immigration hearing, José Cobián, known to local carpenters as José Luis Mendoza, was given an extra month to remain in the United States. His next hearing is scheduled for March 15.

As reported in previous issues of the Northwest Labor Press, Cobián, 36, was a well-regarded union organizer with the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters until his September 2006 arrest on immigration-related charges. He pled guilty to passport fraud and was sentenced to probation, with the expectation that he will be deported to Mexico by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Thus far, Cobián has been unable to afford a lawyer. A public defender represented him in the passport fraud case, but immigration is considered an administrative, not criminal, proceeding, without the right to a court-appointed attorney.

To raise money for an attorney, Cobián's supporters will hold a fundraising dinner and silent auction March 10 at 7 p.m. at Peace House, 2116 NE 18th Ave.

Contributions can also be made at any U.S. Bank branch or mailed to U.S. Bank, 636 SE Grand Ave., Portland OR 97214. Checks should be made out to the Luis Mendoza Solidarity Fund.

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