

## Health care reform topic of retirees group

The Oregon chapter of the Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) held its fourth annual convention March 17 at the International Longshore and Warehouse Union in Northwest Portland.

The keynote speaker was former Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber. An emergency room doctor from Roseburg, Kitzhaber launched the Archimedes Movement, a project to make basic health insurance coverage available to all Oregonians.

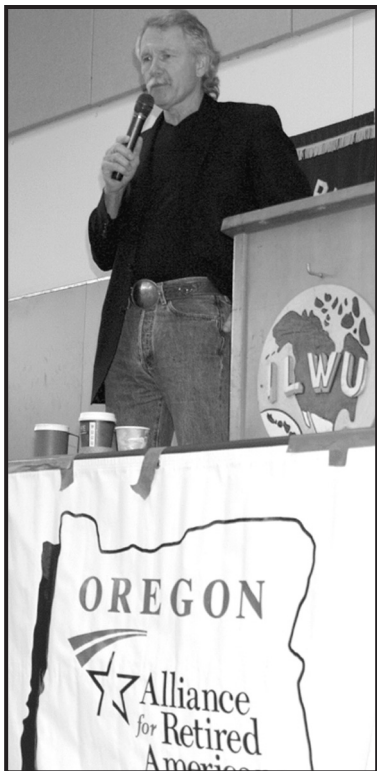
The Oregon Better Health Act was introduced in the Legislature earlier this year. Senate Bill 27 would pool monies from Medicare, Medicaid and employer-sponsored insurance plans to provide a "core benefit" of health care benefits for everyone. Kitzhaber told delegates it can be done without raising taxes, although it would require approval of Congress.

Kitzhaber envisioned a health care system similar to that of the public school system, where everyone pays regardless of economic status and "everyone has universal access to a defined level of education." Parents can always enhance educational opportunities with tutors and by other means — but at their own expense, he said.

When budgets are tight, Kitzhaber said leaders might increase class sizes or take other measures to save money. "But they never argue about eligibility. Never."

SB 29 has been merged with another health care bill sponsored by Senators Ben Westlund of Bend and Alan Bates of Ashland. The Senate Special Committee on Health Care Reform is working on a draft that combines language from both bills with portions of two other health care plans currently circulating around the state.

Westlund was joined at the ARA



**Former Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber talks about health care reform to more than 50 people who attended the annual convention of the Oregon Chapter of the Alliance for Retired Americans.**

meeting by State Rep. Mitch Greenlick. Greenlick discussed House Joint Resolution 18, a referral to voters that seeks to add language to the State Constitution making health care a right for all legal residents of Oregon.

In other business, Congresswoman Darlene Hooley presented an ARA award for service to retirees Bill and Genie Ubelacker. Genie is a retired member of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees and both are active in the Democratic Party.

Verna Porter was re-elected president of the Oregon Alliance of Retired Americans. Others elected were Barney Gorter, 1st vice president; Ken Hennrich, 2nd vice president; Val Jack, secretary; Ron Rogers, treasurer; and Leanna Hakala and Scott Blau, trustees.

## NW Labor History confab set May 11-12 at IBEW #48

"Preserving Union History: Saving The Day" is the theme of the 39th annual Pacific Northwest Labor History Association Conference, slated Friday and Saturday, May 11-12, at the IBEW Local 48-NECA Training Center, 15937 (16021) NE Airport Way, Portland.

The conference brings union members from Oregon, Washington and British Columbia together for a week-end of workshops, panel discussions and entertainment.

The annual awards banquet will be held May 11 starting at 6:30 p.m. Ed Barnes, retired business manager of IBEW Local 48, will be honored with the Labor History "Person of the Year" Award.

Speakers that evening will include Labor Commissioner Dan Gardner and Tim Nesbitt, adviser to Gov. Ted Kulongoski. Nesbitt is a former president of the Oregon AFL-CIO.

On May 12, a plenary session starting at 9 a.m. will feature Joseph McCartin, associate professor of history at Georgetown University, who will talk about the the air traffic controllers and how their mass firings in 1981 by President Ronald Reagan changed the face of collective bargaining in the

United States.

Also speaking on Saturday will be Heather Mayer of Simon Fraser University; Trevor Griffey of the University of Washington History Department; and Adam Klugman of the Progressive Media Agency. Mayer will discuss the Wobblies and the 1907 sawmill strike in Portland. Griffey will talk about working-class radicalism and the electrical workers in the Northwest. And Klugman will make a presentation on telling labor's story.

Registration is \$50 before May 1 and \$65 after that.

For more information, call Ross Rieder at 253-875-9498.

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