



Former congressman Dick Gephardt speaks to more than 180 shop stewards attending an annual Steward Summit of UFCW Local 555. Seated at right is Local 555 President Gene Pronovost.

UFCW Local 555 shop stewards hear from Dick Gephardt at annual summit

No, he isn't running for president again, but former Democratic presidential hopeful Dick Gephardt made a stop in Portland April 26 to speak at the annual Steward Summit of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555.

Gephardt, a former U.S. House Majority Leader out of Missouri, left Congress after an unsuccessful bid for president in 2004, where he received several labor endorsements — including UFCW's.

He now works in the private sector running his own consulting firm. He's a senior counsel for the international law firm of DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary LLP, and an adviser for the investment banking firm Goldman Sachs.

But he still has his hands in politics. Gephardt told the Northwest Labor Press that he's been working with the United Auto Workers and the Big Three automakers on a health insurance reform package that would move anyone 55 years of age or older into Medicare.

"I've got the union on board," he said. "And the indus-

try is close. We should have something to announce next month (in May)."

Speaking to about 180 shop stewards, Gephardt said he also is working with lawmakers on a bill that would extend Medicare to all citizens 55 and older. He said there is debate over how to fund it, but he's hopeful that will soon be worked out and the bill will be introduced.

"This issue (health care) is the moral issue of our time," he said. "You've got to treat everyone fairly."

Gephardt said organized labor is a major part of the fabric that makes America what it is. "It is the labor movement that created the middle class in this country," he said. "If unions keep declining, there will be no middle class."

Gephardt supports the Employee Free Choice Act that is now in the Senate. The bill would allow for card-check recognition in union organizing campaigns.

"Right now it's not a level playing field. If it was, unions would win a lot more elections," he said.

Letter Carriers to collect food on Saturday, May 12

Approximately 3,000 letter carriers in Oregon and Clark County, Wash., will help "Stamp Out Hunger" on Saturday, May 12, part of the annual National Association of Letter Carriers Food Drive.

Prior to May 12, bags will be delivered to every household. All you have to do is fill the bag with nonperishable food and leave it at your mailbox. Please do NOT include glass items, homemade items or previously opened containers.

Letter Carriers will collect the bags and deliver them to drop points, where volunteers will sort the donations and forward them to the Oregon Food Bank.

The NALC Food Drive is the largest one-day food collection of the year for the Portland metropolitan area, said Rick Ukena of the Oregon Food Bank. "The hard work of the letter carriers and the generosity of the postal customers helps us meet the demand for emergency food in Oregon and Southwest Washington," he said.

This year's Food Drive is particularly important due to a drop in the amount of food the Oregon Food Bank receives from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This year's goal is to collect 1.5-million pounds of food. Last year's Food Drive brought in just over 1.4-million pounds of food throughout Oregon and Southwest Washington.

Many unions help make the food drive possible with donations that go toward purchasing and printing the food collection bags. Some of the unions involved include Machinists Lodges 63 and 1005; United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555, Oregon AFCSME Council 75, Oregon AFL-CIO, Fire Fighters unions, affiliates of the Columbia-Pacific Building Trades Council and the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters, to name a few.

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