

Bend transit contractor drops appeal of ATU union election

BEND — A May 12 Solidarity Rally for city bus drivers trying to form a union turned into a victory celebration after their employer — Paratransit Services — announced it was dropping its appeal of a union election and reinstating a pro-union employee it fired shortly after the election.

On Jan. 29, Bend Area Transit employees voted 19-15 to join Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757. Paratransit Services, a non-profit corporation based in Bremerton, Wash., contracts with the city to provide bus service. The company has transit contracts with various unions in several other states.

It was a hard-fought campaign, with Paratransit Services using all the typical anti-union strategies such as captive-audience meetings with employees and letters to homes. A month after the election, Russ Evans, a newly-elected shop steward, was fired.

The company challenged the elec-

tion results with the National Labor Relations Board. An NLRB hearings officer overruled the challenge and certified the union. But Paratransit appealed to the full NLRB in Washington, D.C. Waiting for a ruling there might have taken years.

Bus operators and the union appealed to the Bend City Council, which on April 19 sent a letter to Paratransit president David Baker asking him to drop the appeal and recognize ATU.

The Central Oregon chapter of Jobs with Justice, working with area unions and community supporters, planned the May 12 Solidarity Rally featuring State Sen. Ben Westlund, Bend City Councilor Linda Johnson, Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain and others. The unions also got Gov. Ted Kulongoski, U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden and Oregon Labor Commissioner Dan Gardner involved.

With pressure mounting, Baker, in an advertisement published in the Bend Bulletin May 8, announced that the company was dropping the appeal.

Jon Hunt, president of ATU Local 757, said the night before the solidarity rally he negotiated reinstatement for Evans with full back pay and seniority.






Hunt credited the "incredible solidarity" of labor and community groups for the turnaround.

Local Motion

April 2007

Union election activity in Oregon and SW Washington, according to the National Labor Relations Board and the Oregon Employment Relations Board

Elections held

Company		Location	Results:		
Date	Union		Union	No Union	
Freightliner (Pre-Delivery Inspection)					
4/3	Machinists District Lodge 24	Portland	12	2	
Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the NW					
4/10	SEIU Local 49	Portland	9	0	
Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the NW					
4/10	SEIU Local 49	Portland	8	1	
Providence Home Services Division					
4/19	Oregon Nurses Association	Portland	85	28	
First Student					
4/19	OR School Empl. Assoc.	Molalla	25	11	
Oregon Housing & Associated Services/WHEELS					
4/27	ATU Local 757	Salem	11	6	
Kaiser Foundation Health Plan					
4/27	SEIU Local 49	Portland	17	4	
Haggen's					
4/13	Bakers Local 114	Beaverton	3	4	

Elections requested

Company	Location	# of employees
SEIU Local 49	Portland	
Associated Field Representatives vs. OPEIU Local 11		6
Community Tissue Services	Portland	
Office & Professional Employees International Union Local 11		10
Newberg Police Department	Newberg	
Office & Professional Employees International Union Local 11		29
Oregon Housing & Associated Services	Salem	
Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757		15
Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of NW	Portland	
Service Employees International Union Local 49		30
Santiam Canyon Communications Center	Stayton	
American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees		12
First Student	Aurora	
Oregon School Employees Association		51
City of Eagle Point (police)	Eagle Point	
Teamsters Local 223		11
Yamhill County	McMinnville	
Teamsters Local 223 vs. Yamhill County Employees Association		208

...Immigration reform a touchy issue for labor

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dents of some kind, and just under a third are illegal immigrants. Illegal immigrants number about 12 million, and make up about 5 percent of the U.S. workforce.

With the population of illegal immigrants growing about 500,000 a year, Congress is under tremendous pressure to do something. Most Americans say they don't have a problem with legal immigration, and U.S. embassies issue about 400,000 legal permanent resident visas a year. But Americans say they

are bothered by illegal immigration — in an early-April poll by the Los Angeles Times and Bloomberg News, 54 percent said they believe illegal immigration harms the economy.

For the union movement, immigration can be a touchy issue, said Bob Bussel, director and associate professor of the Labor Education and Research Center at the University of Oregon. Some unions, like the licensed construction trades, aren't affected much by illegal immigration, but others, particularly Carpenters, Laborers,

Sheet Metal Workers, and Painters, compete against contractors who pay workers in cash, under the table.

And how to respond to that has provoked fierce debate at membership meetings in recent months.

"At the rank-and-file level," Bussel said, "there is real heat about it." Union leaders, for their part, are trying to be pragmatic, Bussel said: "They're saying, 'these folks are working in our industries; if we don't bring them in and build relationships, they're going to undercut union standards.'"

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