

# ...Strike impacts large projects

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Another issue in the drywallers' dispute involves a merger of pension funds. The Carpenters want to merge drywall pension funds into a region-wide fund with all the other Carpenter locals. It is ultimately the responsibility of pension fund trustees to execute such a merger, but the Carpenters are hoping to expedite that with language in their collective bargaining agreement. The contractors association opposes a merger.

The drywall strike has impacted major projects throughout Oregon and Southwest Washington, including three condo towers on South Waterfront, the Nines Hotel in downtown Portland (formerly a Meier & Frank department store); remodeling work at Clackamas

Town Center, the new Columbian newspaper plant in Vancouver, Wash., the Lower Columbia College's new theater project in Longview, Peace Health Hospital in Eugene, and the new RiverBend hospital being built in north Springfield, to list only a few.

The strike also has opened a rift within the building trades. That's because there was language in the ceiling and wall contractors proposal that would have allowed the Carpenters Union to sign new contractors outside its historic jurisdiction — specifically wall finishing and structural interior work. That work traditionally has been performed by members of the Painters, Plasterers, Cement Masons and Iron Workers unions.

The language, which is contained in

the Washington ceiling and wall contract, says that *"the union recognizes the historic separate craft(s) of 'finishing' and confirms that a signatory contractor shall assign the finishing work amongst the craft(s) with respect to such finishing work through a separate union agreement covering finishing/finishers or by written assignment. If a signatory contractor makes no written assignment to a union which is not a party to this agreement within 60 days of becoming bound to the terms of this agreement, such finishing work shall as of the 61st day, become covered in all respects by this agreement. The union agrees to promptly notify the NW Wall & Ceiling Contractors Association of new contractors who become signatory."*



Pete Savage, regional manager of the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters, addresses some 400 union and family members who attended a strike rally June 5 at Gabriel Park in SW Portland. Savage announced that picket duty pay would raise from \$75 to \$100 a day.

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The other crafts see the contract language as a "raid" on their work. The Carpenters say it's not raiding the other unions, but merely signing new contractors to their union if they aren't already signatory with another craft.

"It's an issue that has caused us some grief," Pete Savage, regional manager of the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters told some 400 members at a June 5 strike rally in Southwest Portland.

Franklin told the NW Labor Press that the disputed language is no longer on the table in Oregon.

"This strike is strictly about money," Franklin said. "And if we're successful, everyone else will be successful."

Still, the strike has not been sanctioned by the Columbia-Pacific Building and Construction Trades Council, and many union locals are telling their members to report to work.

John Mohlis, executive secretary-treasurer of the CPBCTC, told the NW Labor Press that the council wants in

writing a statement by the Carpenters that it won't pursue the jurisdiction language. "If we can get assurance that this is just about money, I think there might be more support," Mohlis said.

Teamsters Joint Council No. 37 has sanctioned the strike, and Operating Engineers Local 701 is neutral.

At the national level, Carpenters, Teamsters and Laborers left the AFL-CIO two years ago to form the Change to Win labor federation with four other national unions. After the departure, Teamsters and Laborers locals — and until two weeks ago, several Carpenters locals — in the Portland area maintained their affiliation with the Columbia-Pacific Building Trades Council.

As of press time on June 12, the Carpenters said no new talks had been scheduled. Franklin said Carpenters from five states were brought in June 11 to help with picketing. Last week, the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters raised picket duty pay from \$75 to \$100 a shift.



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