



NORTHWEST

LABOR PRESS

Volume 108
Number 20
October 19, 2007
Portland

Convention Action

Oregon AFL-CIO ramps up for aggressive Labor 2008

SEASIDE— Firefighters hate to hear the words “back down.”

“It means a building is lost,” said Tom Chamberlain, president of the Oregon AFL-CIO and a member of Portland Fire Fighters Local 43. “As a firefighter leading the AFL-CIO, I vow the Oregon union movement will never back down.”

With that, more than 250 delegates attending the 50th convention of the state labor federation agreed to fund Labor 2008’s political campaign with a special one-time per capita tax assessment that will generate upwards of \$300,000. They also launched the “Unity Team” — a formation of 15 union leaders and organizers who will

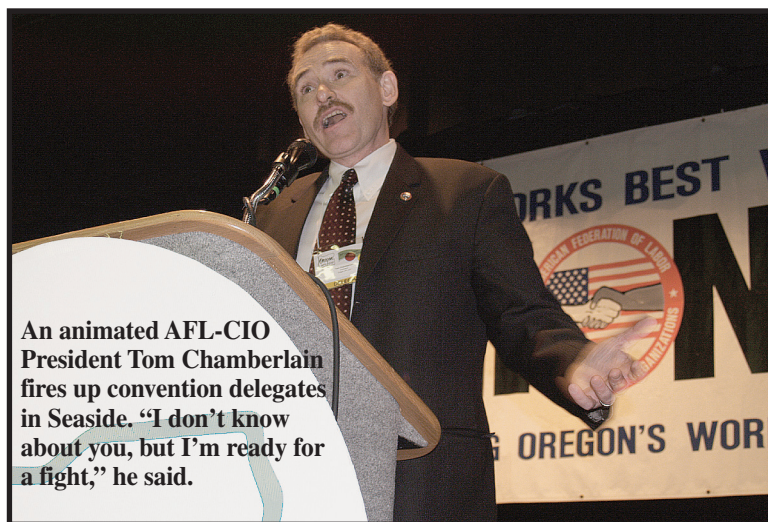
coordinate large-scale multi-union organizing campaigns throughout the state.

“I don’t know about you, but I’m ready for a fight,” Chamberlain said.

Chamberlain and Barbara Byrd were re-elected without opposition to new four-year terms as president and secretary-treasurer, respectively, of the Oregon AFL-CIO. The secretary-treasurer post is part-time.

A full slate of Executive Board and Executive Committee members also were elected or re-elected by acclamation.

The national AFL-CIO has picked Oregon as a target state in the 2008 election cycle. Its primary goal is to



An animated AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain fires up convention delegates in Seaside. “I don’t know about you, but I’m ready for a fight,” he said.

help defeat Republican U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith.

Keynote speaker John Sweeney, president of the national AFL-CIO, put it simply: “Gordon Smith has got to go now.”

Sweeney said at the national level the AFL-CIO next year will spend a record \$53 million on political education, registration, information and get-out-the-vote drives. The labor federation will concentrate its efforts on 13 U.S. Senate races (including Oregon) and more than 50 U.S. House races in an effort to increase the pro-union majorities in both chambers.

Two Democrats vying to challenge

(Turn to Page 3)

Edwards tells labor he’ll be a ‘true friend’ as president



Delegates crowd around Democratic presidential candidate John Edwards following his speech at the 50th convention of the Oregon AFL-CIO. Edwards told some 450 delegates and guests: “I want to be the president who explains to the country how important the labor movement has been.”

SEASIDE — Presidential candidate John Edwards says that if he is elected president, union workers will have a true friend in the White House.

“I want to be the president who goes out on the White House lawn and says the word ‘union.’ You haven’t heard that in a while,” he told some 450 delegates and guests attending the 50th convention of the Oregon AFL-CIO.

Edwards, whose parents were union millworkers, says he understands the interests of workers.

“I want to be the president who explains to the country how important the labor movement has been,” he said. “If we want to improve and strengthen the middle class in this country, we have to grow and strengthen the union movement.”

Speaking minutes before Edwards, national AFL-CIO President John Sweeney told delegates that the former U.S. senator from North Carolina and running mate with John Kerry in the 2004 presidential election has marched on more picket lines than any other candidate in the race.

At an AFL-CIO Organizing Summit last December, Edwards received the Paul Wellstone Award, named in honor of the late senator from Minnesota. The AFL-CIO established the

award to recognize elected leaders who take a strong stand for workers’ freedom to form unions and who fight for social and economic justice.

“John Edwards received it for doing more for labor than any other politician,” said Stewart Acuff, director of organizing for the national AFL-CIO.

The national labor federation has not endorsed a presidential candidate for the primary election. Several international unions have made endorsements, but they are all over the map. Edwards is backed by the United Steelworkers, the Mine Workers, and the Carpenters Union of the Change to Win federation.

Edwards told the convention that he supports universal health care and card-check recognition in union organizing drives.

“In my America, every person is worthy of health coverage,” he said. “I want to say to Congress and to members of my Administration ‘If you don’t pass universal health care by July of 2009 — then lose your health care.’”

Edwards said a universal health care insurance program would be expensive, but that it could be paid for by ending the Bush tax cuts to those

(Turn to Page 3)