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Portland*Unions help make spirits bright*

Children from inner-North and Northeast Portland had their pick of toys at the 11th annual Presents from Partners holiday gift-giving program sponsored by the Northwest Oregon Labor Council and Labor's Community Service Agency, AFL-CIO. Several hundred children received three to four toys at the event held Dec. 22 at Genesis Community Center. "This is a wonderful event for our community, and we have the labor council and community service agency to thank," said Genesis youth minister Mark Kernell. Toys are donated by union locals, the BULL Session Golf Tournament and Saturn of Beaverton. Cash donations are used to purchase gifts — with a focus on U.S.-made and union-made items.

NLRB rules bosses  
can bar union e-mail

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) continued its anti-union campaign, ruling that employers can bar workers from sending union-related e-mails at work.

The 3-2 decision was made Dec. 16 — and was one of the last actions of NLRB Chairman Robert Battista, whose term expired that day. Battista, a management-side labor lawyer from Detroit, was appointed by President Bush five years ago and has been part of a three-Republican majority that has cast a string of anti-union rulings, many of them reversals from previous boards. Two of the three majority members were recess appointments (named to the board by President Bush when the Senate was in recess, thus avoiding a confirmation hearing).

Not surprisingly, labor reacted angrily to the e-mail decision, calling it "the modern day equivalent of blocking employees from talking around the office water cooler or using the break room bulletin board."

"Anyone with e-mail knows this is how employees communicate with each other in today's workplace," said AFL-CIO General Counsel Jon Hiatt. "Outrageously, in allowing employers to ban such communications for union purposes, the Bush labor board has

again struck at the heart of what the nation's labor laws were intended to protect — the right of employees to discuss working conditions and other matters of mutual concern."

The majority argued that because union members can still communicate face-to-face, the employer can decide to ban use of company e-mail for union communications.

Dissenting board members — both Democrats — called the board majority "Rip Van Winkle."

"Only a board asleep for the past 20 years could fail to recognize e-mail has revolutionized communication both within and outside the workplace. In 2007, one cannot reasonably contend, as the majority does, that an e-mail system is a piece of communications equipment to be treated just as the law treats bulletin boards, telephones, and pieces of scrap paper," they said.

The ruling stems from a case involving the Eugene Register-Guard newspaper and The Newspaper Guild Local 37194, an affiliate of Communications Workers of America. The two sides were in the midst of a prolonged bargaining fight when, in 2000, then-Guild President Suzi Prozanski received two written warn-

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## 2008: The Year of China

By DON McINTOSH  
Associate Editor

2008 will be a year of global prominence for China. The 2008 Summer Olympics will focus the world's attention on Beijing in August. But China's rapid economic expansion has already forced the world to pay attention in recent years. In a very short time, China has emerged as contract factory to the world, and an economic superpower.

"If I had grandkids, I'd want them to learn Mandarin," said Oregon State Rep. Jeff Barker, (D-Portland), who visited China in November as part of a two-week official delegation. Like most Western visitors, Barker came away wide-eyed at the newness and massiveness of China's coastal cities.

Nowhere is China's impact clearer than in its trade relationship with the United States. U.S. companies were already well on the way to outsourcing manufacturing to Third World countries when China became a member of the World Trade Organization in 2000.

Joining the WTO was a signal to the West that China was serious about being a place to do business, and a pledge that it would play by the rules. Since then, China has become firmly established as the manufacturer of choice.

U.S. imports from China increased from \$81 billion in 1999 to nearly \$288 billion in 2006. U.S. exports to China also rose, from \$13 billion to \$55 billion. Hiding between those two statistics is America's fastest-growing "export" — jobs. That's because while the increased exports are mostly raw materials and capital goods, the increased imports are finished products and consumer goods. In other words, U.S. companies are outsourcing the "value-added" stage of industrial production to a country where labor is cheap, leaving most U.S. workers to do what remains: extract American raw materials, truck around imported finished goods and stand at the cash registers where they're sold.

Trade statistics tell the story. In the five-year span of 2002 to 2006, according to the Foreign Trade Division of the U.S. Census

*More and more American companies are selling raw materials to Chinese contractors, who turn them into finished products using cheap labor*

Bureau:

- Annual U.S. wood pulp and pulpwood exports to China more than tripled from \$424 million to \$1.48 billion, and exports of pulp and paper machinery rose from \$89 million to \$146 million. In the same period, imports of paper and paper products more than quadrupled from \$131 million to \$576 million, and imports of books, magazines, and printed material more than doubled from \$556 million to \$1.25 billion.

- U.S. exports of semi-conductors, used in computers, cell phones and CD players, more than tripled from \$1.59 billion to \$5.88 billion. Meanwhile, imports of computers rose more than tenfold from \$1.6 billion to \$17.38 billion; computer accessories doubled from \$13.2 billion to \$28.9 billion; telecommunications equipment tripled from \$2.8 to \$8.6 billion.

Portland's maritime shipping stats tell the same story. Container ships brought in \$1.2 billion worth of Chinese goods in 2006,

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