



NORTHWEST

LABOR PRESS

Volume 109
Number 2
January 18, 2008
Portland



Unions Are Ready To Build A New Bridge

Bi-state task force considers options for I-5 bridge over Columbia River

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Tired of traffic bottlenecks on and around the Interstate Bridge?

For the past two years, a 39-member bi-state task force set up by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) has been looking at ways to reduce congestion and improve safety on I-5 between Oregon and Washington.

The advisory group — the Columbia River Crossing Task Force — has sifted through dozens of bridge, transit and highway improvement project proposals, ranging from digging a tunnel under the river to supplementing the existing bridge to building a replacement bridge. The task force has winnowed the proposals to just five, and it expects to narrow it down to one by August.

The proposal that appears most likely to win approval would replace the I-5 Bridge with a new bridge no more than 200-300 feet to the West (downstream.) The new bridge would have five or six standard-sized lanes in each direction, including a safety lane, plus a bike/pedestrian path. And it would have light rail — either on a separate structure just next to it, or within it in some way, like on the bridge's underside. The new bridge would be about 90 feet above the Columbia River — high enough for boats to pass beneath without a bridge-lift, but low enough to avoid complications for air traffic from Portland International Airport and Vancouver's Pearson Field. When the new bridge opened, the existing bridge would be removed.

The bridge would be only one part of the project, however, which also includes improvements along the five-mile stretch of I-5, from State Route 500 in Vancouver to Columbia Boulevard in Portland. To improve safety

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NW lawmakers score well on AFL-CIO vote tallies

Reps. David Wu, Peter DeFazio and Darlene Hooley get perfect marks in the first session of the 110th Congress

Congressional representatives from Oregon and Washington scored quite well on the national AFL-CIO's interim Committee on Political Education (COPE) voting report card released last month in Washington, D.C.

The scorecard is a running record of 34 Senate votes and 33 House votes that took place during the first session of the 110th Congress, but it is not the official voting record for 2007. The AFL-CIO labeled lawmakers' votes as either "right" or "wrong," based on the position the AFL-CIO took.

Bills — and amendments to bills — included the Employee Free Choice Act, limits on guest worker programs, and federal minimum wage increases. A complete list of votes can be found online at www.aflcio.org under the leg-

islative section.

U.S. HOUSE
Oregon Reps. David Wu (1st District); Peter DeFazio (4th District); and Darlene Hooley, (5th District), were among 173 House Democrats to score 100 percent COPE voting records.

Also among the "100 percenters" were Washington Democrats Norm Dicks of Bremerton, and Rick Larsen of Bellingham.

Another 29 Democrats cast only one vote in disagreement with the AFL-CIO. Among them were Vancouver, Washington's Brian Baird, (30-1-2 absent); Tacoma's Adam Smith, (32-1), and Jay Inslee of Shoreline, (27-1-5).

The three Washingtonians' "wrong" votes came on a Farm bill that had attachments that both strengthened Davis-Bacon enforcement and ended privatization of some civil service jobs. HR 2419, according to the AFL-CIO



DAVID WU



PETER DeFAZIO



DARLENE HOOLEY

synopsis, authorized \$2 billion in federal loan guarantees for bio-refineries and bio-fuel production plants with requirements that all construction be enforced by federal Davis-Bacon Act prevailing wage standards. It also stopped the Bush Administration from continuing to contract out jobs of federal workers who conduct eligibility determinations for the food stamp program.

Also voting against that bill were Oregon Congressman Earl Blumenauer (3rd District), and Washington

Rep. Jim McDermott of Seattle. Blumenauer compiled a 30-201 scorecard and McDermott was 31-2. The Farm bill passed 231-191.

Spokeswomen for Blumenauer and Baird told the NW Labor Press that the congressmen are strong supporters of the Davis-Bacon Act, but that the Farm bill, overall, favored large agribusinesses over the needs of small farmers and rural communities, among other issues they had with the bill.

Blumenauer and McDermott also voted against labor's position on HR

1585, a defense authorization bill that was modified to restore the rights of federal civilian workers to collectively bargain. The bill, which set military spending priorities but did not actually allot the money, passed 397-27, with 25 Democrats and two Republicans opposing it. The opposition voters wanted conditions for troop withdrawal from Iraq. The AFL-CIO supported the bill because it deleted most of President Bush's plan to take away union rights for the Department of Defense's 700,000 civilian workers. But the defense measure also lacked limits on the war in Iraq, and that prompted the opposition to the measure.

The defense bill vote allowed 51 Republicans to avoid a shutout and register one "right" vote (1-33) on their COPE scorecards.

Oregon Republican Greg Walden of Cascade Locks (2nd District) scored 33 percent, with a vote tally of 11-22. Washington Rep. Doc Hastings of Pasco was one of the worst lawmakers, voting with labor at 2-29-2.

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