

# ...Forged signatures propel anti-union ballot measures

(From Page 1)

measure she said she opposes, or did he copy her signature from other sheets?

Rachel Ashmun of Northeast Portland says she only signs petitions that pertain to environmental causes. But her name and address appear on a measure to limit attorneys fees. Shown the sheet with her signature on it, she says she doesn't recognize it as her own. Due to illness, her hand shakes, giving her signature a distinct appearance that the signature on the sheet doesn't have. But someone named "Cairo" listing an address in Los Alamitos, California, signed at the bottom of the page swearing he/she witnessed the signature.

Frank Hood of Southeast Portland frequently rides the MAX to pick up his granddaughter, and says he remembers being approached on the train by a circulator, presumably Vernon Van. Van, who has a Long Beach, California, address, signed swearing he witnessed Hood's signature on the

teacher pay initiative. Hood told Our Oregon that although he signed several of the petitions, he disagrees with and did not sign the teacher pay initiative.

Marilyn Dale of Southwest Portland told the NW Labor Press she didn't remember signing anything about teacher pay. Yet her name appears on Justin Schoenleber's petition sheet for the initiative, dated Dec. 21. All the addresses on the page are in the same person's handwriting. Dale said that though the signature resembles hers, at least three details prove it's not her real signature. Dale said she may have signed another petition when she was approached outside the Beaverton library. Was it traced onto another sheet? Reached by the NW Labor Press, Schoenleber said he worked that library in November and December, but vigorously denied any wrongdoing. Schoenleber explained his method to the Labor Press. He would start with the most popular initiative, and ask the signer to print their name and write out their address next to their signature.

Then he would ask them to sign other sheets, onto which he would copy the other information. [That practice was legal until January 2008, when a new law aimed at initiative abuse took effect.]

"Typically I'll say, 'there's a couple more items that require your signature,'" Schoenleber said, "and the constituents may not even ask what they are signing."

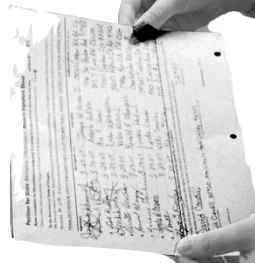
The Our Oregon complaint also included an affidavit from a lawyer in Bend who believes he witnessed a paid petitioner violating the new law. On June 20, Tim Williams saw a man and a woman outside the downtown Bend post office gathering signatures for a measure that would limit attorneys fees. He asked the woman her name, and she said "Angela White." When he asked the man his name, it was the woman who answered — "Brian Schrier." Williams said the two seemed nervous about the interaction.

The law now requires paid petitioners to register with the state, provide a photo, and swear they have no recent convictions for fraud or identity theft. Back at his office, Williams checked it out. The man with White looked nothing like the photo on file for Schrier. The next day, Williams saw White gathering signatures, this time with the real Schrier.

Altogether, the circulators named in the Our Oregon complaint gathered

signatures for at least nine initiative petition campaigns.

"We believe that because the same circulators were collecting signatures for [other] initiative petitions . . .," the group wrote in the complaint "you will upon investigation,



(Editor's Note: Look to the Aug. 15 issue of the Northwest Labor Press for more details about the initiatives that make it to the ballot. Unions are gearing up to fight the measures, and are joining with other constituencies targeted by the measures to form a group, Defend Oregon, that will wage a unified campaign against them.)

Rachel Lebwohl of Our Oregon shows irregularities in signatures that she and a co-worker found in a small sample of anti-union initiative petitions sponsored by Bill Sizemore. The organization has filed a complaint with the Oregon Elections Division.

discover the same violations on other sheets."

"We want to hold all of these people criminally accountable for what they've done," said Moore, the Our Oregon spokesperson.

On July 17, the Elections Division assigned compliance specialist Norma Buckno to investigate the complaint. A week later, none of the named individuals interviewed by the NW Labor Press had been called.

If the results of the Our Oregon probe prove to be examples of forgery, the practice may well have made the difference in getting several measures on the ballot this year. When county elections clerks performed the required validity check of signatures, they found over a third were invalid. Three of Sizemore's five measures qualified for the ballot by fewer than a thousand signatures. If even 1 percent of the signatures on those petitions were forgeries, that would be enough to have made the difference in getting them on the ballot.

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