

## Gov. Kulongoski reveals climate change agenda

SALEM — Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski announced Oct. 27 a series of climate change bills that he will bring to the Legislature when it convenes in January 2009.

The governor's climate change agenda centers around four key areas: greenhouse gas reductions; energy conservation and efficiency; renewable energy; and sustainable transportation.

Each area contains concepts that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, encourages alternative power and vehicle use, drives new energy technology development, provides energy efficiency information to consumers and protects low income energy users.

"We have made great progress in the fight against climate change over the last five years, but that was just the beginning," the Democratic governor said. "This next session we must be bolder, more strategic and even more visionary if we want to reach our greenhouse reduction goals and truly pull ahead of the pack, leading our country and the globe on green living and green working."

The major elements of the governor's climate change agenda include developing net-zero energy use building codes, expanding the Business Energy Tax Credit to new more efficient vehicles, development of energy performance certificates for homebuyers, and a regional "cap and trade" program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Kulongoski announced his legislative plan at the Center for Health and Healing at Oregon Health and Science University. With him were Peggy Fowler, CEO of Portland General Electric, and Mark Edlen of Gerding Edlen Developers.

For a complete description of the governor's 2009 climate changes agenda, go to: [http://governor.oregon.gov/Gov/pdf/climate\\_change\\_agenda\\_1008.pdf](http://governor.oregon.gov/Gov/pdf/climate_change_agenda_1008.pdf).

## ...Elevator Constructors #23 turns 100

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peace over the years: The last nationwide strike was in 1972. Locals sometimes wage walkouts over local issues, but there have been none in Portland in at least 30 years.

Like in other building trades crafts, IUEC-signatory contractors hire and lay off workers as they win and complete bids. So the union operates a hiring hall to keep members on the job regardless of which company is doing the work.

Though the national economy is looking grim, so far, local work has held up, said Local 23 business representative Frank Regalado, but if the economy slows further, members could be headed for hardship.

Old-timers remember the boom-and-bust construction cycles of the '80s and '90s. When recessions hit, it's a good time to have saved up some reserves. And a bad recession can actually take wages backward: Regalado said in the worst of the '80s downturn, IUEC, like other building trades unions, took wage cuts to stay competitive. The last two five-year contracts have seen decent gains, however, Regalado said.

When work does slow, IUEC members apply for unemployment benefits like other workers, or they hit the road to work as travelers in the jurisdictions



Local 23 retiree Earl Hickman (left) receives a 50-year pin from IUEC Assistant General President James Higgins. A quick poll of retirees present determined that Hickman is the Local 23 member of longest standing. Behind them is Local 23 member George Scheck.

of other locals where there may be work.

Local 23's jurisdiction covers Southwest Washington all of Oregon except four northeastern counties, but it didn't grow beyond 75 members for 50 years. It was the late 1950s before it hired its first full-time business agent. That was John Webb, and he set up an office in the now-defunct Labor Temple, which was located on Southwest

Fourth Avenue in downtown Portland. Today, Local 23 has 285 members, and is part of an international union of close to 29,000 members. Its offices are at 12779 N.E. Whitaker Way, Portland.

Local 23's 100 birthday bash drew a congratulatory proclamation from Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski, a guest appearance from state Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian, and words of praise from U.S. Senator Ron Wyden's office, delivered by labor liaison Al Panek. Two of the international union's top three officials also attended the Oct. 25 event — General Secretary-Treasurer Kevin Stringer and Assistant General President Jim Higgins — and helped officiate as honors were given out to some of the local's longest-serving members.

And a team of instructors — Bob Pyne, Dave Tremain, Mike Bodendorfer, Dave Hyde, Dale Taylor, Don Springer, and Steve King — is molding the generation that will start off Local 23's next 100 years. IUEC apprenticeship combines mechanical and electrical training, both on-the-job and in a classroom at the union hall. Right now, 70 apprentices are learning the ropes. About two-thirds typically make it through. It takes five years, but IUEC apprentices know that if they make journeyman, they have a challenging and rewarding career ahead of them.

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## UNITE HERE seeks City's help dealing with Vancouver Hilton

VANCOUVER — Union employees of the Hilton Vancouver Washington are asking for help from the City of Vancouver to improve their health coverage.

The hotel and adjoining Vancouver Convention Center are owned by the City and managed by the Hilton Hotels Corporation. About 140 hotel and convention center workers belong to UNITE HERE Local 9.

Their first union contract, ratified in June, has a wage and benefit "re-opener" clause, meaning that the two sides will reopen bargaining to determine the wages and benefits for the final years of the contract.

In a letter to the council, the union

said currently 54 members of the bargaining unit make the state minimum wage and get no help with health insurance. Under the contract, the Hilton will offer a bare-bones employee-only Kaiser health plan starting in January to workers who pay \$40 a month. The union argues that's substandard compared with other unionized hotel workers in the region, who pay as little as \$35 a month for full-family coverage that costs their employers \$605 a month. And the City's own employees have a comprehensive benefits package, including family and domestic partner medical, dental and vision benefits, with a choice of Regence Blue Cross Blue Shield or Kaiser Permanente.

Local 9 says involvement by the Vancouver City Council could make a difference. The union is asking the Council to make funds available through the budgetary process, if necessary, to achieve affordable health care for the hotel workers, or to require the Hilton to adjust current spending.

The Vancouver City Council is now working on its budget, and is anticipating tough times ahead thanks to a deepening recession. But the union plans to make its case at a Nov. 10 public hearing on the budget.

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