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MEETING NOTICES

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## Foster kids' holiday party gets boost from UA Local 290

A \$1,000 donation by Plumbers and Fitters Local 290 to the Child Welfare Division in East Multnomah County helped foster kids enjoy a holiday party Dec. 16. "We could not make this happen without the donation from Local 290," said Deborah Bruun, (pictured above left with Local 290 Business Manager John Endicott). Bruun is a social service specialist who, along with co-worker Stacey Mahler, help to organize the annual event. The Oregon Department of Human Services used to fund the party for more than 250 kids, parents and foster parents, but budget cuts in the late 1990s put an end to it. Social service workers thought the event was so vital for the children that they began raising money on their own time. "This is an East County tradition. Kids look forward to this every year," Bruun said. In addition to the fundraising, some 40 to 50 state workers volunteer to decorate and help run the party, which includes craftmaking and cookie decorating rooms (pictured above right), cartoon drawings, pizza, gifts, and a visit from Santa Claus. "The kids really enjoy this," said Endicott, who toured the DHS facility in Southeast Portland on Dec. 16. "It really makes you feel good to give back to the community. This is very special."



## Labor maps out goals for 2009 Legislature

By DON McINTOSH  
Associate Editor

Oregon lawmakers face a daunting challenge when the 2009 legislative session begins Jan. 12.

Because the state budget depends heavily on personal and corporate income taxes, job losses and business failures are taking a bite. The state general fund budget of about \$7 billion a year could take a hit of \$340 million. That will make it harder for government to deliver education, criminal justice and social services.

Gov. Ted Kulongoski and state legislators will be looking for new sources of revenue and making budget cuts, all while trying to reboot the economy.

Union leaders will be in Salem for those debates. They'll be testifying when the Legislature discusses health care reform and measures to combat global warming. And they'll be calling on the expanded Democratic majority to deliver on a pro-labor agenda.

Unlike the federal government, which can borrow to fund spending, states mostly have to pay as they go. A sales tax, regressive and unpopular, is almost certainly off the table this year, but lawmakers are expecting to consider raising tobacco, alcohol, and gas taxes.

And they may look at higher taxes on the well-off and on businesses, two groups that have seen their overall tax burden shrink in recent years. One proposal would create a new top bracket on Oregonians earning more than \$250,000 a year. Another would raise Oregon's corporate minimum income tax, which is currently \$10 a year and hasn't been increased since 1929.

"The budget is going to be the backdrop against which everything is played out this session," said State Sen. Diane Rosenbaum, a longtime union activist and state legislator. "But it also gives us the opportunity to make significant changes."

Gov. Kulongoski is proposing to raise the corporate minimum to \$25 for the smallest companies, an amount which would rise to \$5,000 a year for companies that have annual sales of over \$25 million. That would raise about \$42 million a year, which he wants to use to increase need-based scholarships for students at Oregon universities and community colleges.

Kulongoski also wants a 2-cent increase in the gas tax, and increased registration and title fees — enough to raise \$500 million a year, which he proposes to use to modernize Oregon's transportation system, thereby creating 6,700 jobs. Most if not all of the public works projects are subject to state prevailing wage requirements.

Lawmakers may also decide to end the practice — which exists in no other state — of mailing refunds to taxpayers when revenues exceed projections. Instead, the so-called "kicker" would go toward a rainy-day fund to fund schools and other priorities in times of recession.

A plan to provide comprehensive health coverage to all Oregonians is still years away from enactment, but this year, health reform advocates will push to expand coverage to about one-third of Oregon's 600,000 uninsured. That could take some pressure off union negotiators, who have trouble winning raises when employer-paid health care costs keep going up.

As outlined in a proposal from the governor, close to 200,000 children and low-income adults would be added to the Oregon Health Plan, which spreads

## Labor welcomes Solis choice as U.S. labor secretary

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Union leaders welcomed the choice of five-term congresswoman Hilda Solis (D-Calif.) as labor secretary in the incoming Obama Administration.

If confirmed, Solis, 51, would manage a federal department with more than 17,000 employees and an annual budget exceeding \$59 billion that oversees workplace safety, wage and hour laws, job training and unemployment benefits.

Solis, a veteran legislator from Los Angeles and a resident of El Monte, would also be the third Hispanic in Obama's Cabinet, with New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson named Commerce Secretary, and Colorado Sen. Ken Salazar as Interior Secretary.

One labor source said Solis' name was put forward by Service Employees

International Union President Andy Stern, whose union — along with the Change To Win coalition — endorsed Obama's presidential candidacy long before the AFL-CIO did. SEIU is the largest union in Change to Win, and Stern at one point was on Obama's short list for labor secretary.

But leaders ranging from Change to Win Chair Anna Burger to AFL-CIO President John Sweeney welcomed the Solis appointment. So did former House Minority Whip David Bonior (D-Mich.), now chair of the pro-labor American Rights At Work organization.

Bonior, citing his work with Solis since she entered Congress in 2001, called her "a terrific leader who I know first hand will work tirelessly on behalf of America's working families."

Solis sits on the board of directors of

American Rights At Work.

Sweeney said the AFL-CIO is "thrilled at the prospect of having Solis as our nation's next labor secretary. We're confident that she will return the department to one of its core missions — to defend workers' basic rights in our nation's workplaces. She's proven to be a passionate leader and advocate for all working families."

The national AFL-CIO pointed out that as a congresswoman, Solis has voted with labor 97 percent of the time on issues it deems important to workers.

Burger said Solis — the daughter of Mexican and Nicaraguan immigrants who were blue-collar, union workers — "has never forgotten where she came from, and how she got to where she is today."

Solis' father was a shop steward in the Teamsters union and her mother belonged to the United Rubber Workers. Solis has credited unions with securing the wages and benefits that allowed her parents to move their family into the middle class, send their children to college and raise a daughter who was elected to Congress.

"Solis does not just vote on behalf of workers, she is their unwavering and tireless voice," Burger added. "She has one of the strongest pro-worker voting records in Congress and is a sponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act."

At a press conference, Solis said she will "work to strengthen our unions and support every American in our nation's diverse workforce."

Tom Chamberlain, president of the

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