

...Wage standards aren't tied to Oregon's energy tax credits

(From Page 2)

ect. In 2008, the Legislature doubled the limit for solar manufacturers, which can now get up to \$22 million in tax breaks per project.

For its Hillsboro factory, SolarWorld was approved for an \$11 million tax credit under the program. As the Portland Tribune reported April 9, since SolarWorld doesn't pay corporate income tax, it sold the credit at a discount to WalMart. [Under the state's "pass through" rule, the tax break, known as Business Energy Tax Credit, can be sold.] SolarWorld will also get \$19.45 million of tax credits for its investment in a new 210,000-square-foot logistics, distribution and production center next to its existing Hillsboro factory.

About 150 to 200 union building

trades workers will be employed on the expansion, due for completion in November. But the Oregon AFL-CIO is pushing lawmakers in Salem to tweak the Business Energy Tax Credit and enterprise zone tax break to better ensure that tax-break-subsidized jobs are good jobs.

The Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council is pushing a proposal to require that companies getting enterprise zone tax breaks on large projects of more than \$5 million be required to pay area standard wages and benefits to the construction workers.

"If local residents are losing tax income off the property, they ought to at least have prevailing wage requirements to protect local workers," said Clif Davis, business manager of International Brotherhood of Electrical

Workers Local 48.

When lawmakers expanded the Business Energy Tax Credit in 2007 and 2008, the state budget was in good shape. Now, a recession is sapping state revenues, and with companies lining up to seek over \$100 million a year in business energy tax breaks, lawmakers are taking a second look.

"[The Business Energy Tax Credit] is talked about as an economic development tool," said Oregon AFL-CIO Political Director Duke Shepard at a Feb. 19 hearing, "but it has none of the standards typically associated with an economic development program. There aren't wage standards. There's no cost-per-job standard."

And it's not at all clear that the credits are necessary for some kinds of renewable energy investment to

take place. Wind farms, for instance, were given a guaranteed market in 2007 when the Legislature required private utilities to massively increase the amount of renewable power they buy — and pass on extra costs to ratepayers.

Solar manufacturers have lots of other reasons to locate in Oregon's "silicon forest." Solar cells and computer chips use the same foundation — silicon wafers — and a similar basic technology. Oregon is a good location for wafer making because it has very pure water, relatively cheap electricity, and an experienced silicon manufacturing workforce. Judging by employment ads, SolarWorld isn't even looking at applicants with less than two years in silicon chip manufacturing.

If it's not clear the credits are even causing the investment, at least they ought to be ensuring decent wages, says labor ally Chuck Sheketoff of the Oregon Center for Public Policy.

Lawmakers appear to be listening. The Oregon Legislature is considering lowering the credit from its current \$10 million to \$5 million per project for projects that generate en-

ergy like wind farms, solar arrays, and methane digesters.

For solar manufacturers, the maximum credit would remain \$20 million — and that amount would be made available to electric vehicle manufacturers as well, if any should choose to locate in Oregon.

Lawmakers are also considering requiring recipients stay in operation for at least five years, and giving the Oregon Department of Energy the authority to consider job creation, where the power will be sold, and whether the credit is necessary for the project to go forward — before credits are approved.

As State Sen. Ginny Burdick put it, "the money we spend on this credit is money that's not being spent on health care, schools, and public safety."

Roger G. Worthington, P.C. leads the fight to find a cure

Mesothelioma

cancer caused by asbestos exposure claims another one of labor's heroes



Earl Kirkland 1926—2009

Earl Kirkland dedicated his life to helping others gain the rights they deserve.

He was the former Executive Secretary of the Columbia/Pacific Building and Construction Trade Council, as well as the Business Manager of the Heat & Frost Insulators and Asbestos Workers, Local 36.

Despite his efforts to protect the health and safety of his union brothers, as well as his own lungs, Mr. Kirkland was recently diagnosed with malignant mesothelioma and passed away on March 30, 2009.

800-831-9399



Asbestos lawyers for life.

For a free booklet of medical/legal information, including medical experts, patient profiles, clinical trials and asbestos products, call us or visit our website.

www.mesothel.com

Offices in Los Angeles, Orange County • Lawyers licensed in California and Oregon

Broadway Floral

for the BEST flowers call
503-288-5537

1638 NE Broadway, Portland

Local Motion

March 2009

Union certifications and decertifications in Oregon and Southwest Washington, as reported by the National Labor Relations Board and the Oregon Employment Relations Board

Recognition elections

Name of employer	Date	Name of union	Location	Results:		
				Union Yes	Union No	
Petermann Northwest (DECERTIFICATION)						
3/5	Teamsters Local 58	Battle Ground	82	73		
Aramark Uniform & Career Apparel						
3/6	Teamsters Local 962	Medford	9	3		
ProTec Fire Services						
3/11	Teamsters Local 962	Medford	5	0		
Safeway						
3/12	UFCW Local 555	Burns	17	24		
Tuality Healthcare						
3/23	Oregon Nurses Assn.	Hillsboro	4	0		

Requests for recognition election

Name of employer	Name of union	Location	Number of employees
Albertsons (coffee bar clerks)		West Linn	
United Food & Commercial Workers Local 555			7
Mercy Flights, Inc. (DECERTIFICATION)		Medford	
Teamsters Local 962			61
REpower USA (windmill maintenance techs)		Portland	
IBEW Local 125			5