

Inside

MEETING NOTICES

See  
Page 6

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**Fred Meyer goes 'green'??**

Bob Childers and Shell Sherman, international reps for the Operative Plasterers and Cement Masons Union, handbill the Hawthorne Fred Meyer store in Southeast Portland Aug. 1 during the store's grand re-opening celebration. Several stores in the Portland metro area are undergoing extensive remodeling, with the Hawthorne location touted as the "first green grocery in the chain." Union officials say that may be true — but not how you might think. "We contend the only green that Fred Meyer is concerned about is economical, not environmental," Childers said. Union officials assert that Portland-headquartered Fred Meyer and its corporate owner Kroger Co. of Cincinnati are cutting corners on remodeling by using out-of-state contractors who pay workers \$12 an hour with virtually no fringe benefits — far below area standards set by the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries. Cement Masons and Electrical Workers locals are leading the campaign against Fred Meyer, but they have strong support from other construction unions. The unions are also seeking boycott sanction from the Northwest Oregon Labor Council. The unions are asking people to protest Fred Meyer's action by calling company president Mike Ellis at 503 232-8844.

**Tackett nominated to take helm at labor council**

Bob Tackett, a 35-year member of Steelworkers Local 330, was the only person nominated for the position of executive secretary-treasurer of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council at the July 27 monthly meeting of delegates.

Nominations are being taken to fill the unexpired term of current executive secretary-treasurer Judy O'Connor, who is retiring mid-term on Aug. 28. A second call for nominations will take place at the delegates' meeting Monday, Aug. 24. If no one else is nominated, Tackett will win by acclamation.

Tackett's nomination by O'Connor, a member of Office and Professional Employees Local 11, received a half-dozen

seconds. Support came from United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555, Machinists District Lodge 24, Columbia Pacific Building and Construction Trades Council, Laborers Local 320, and Steelworkers Local 330.

Tackett is the Workforce Investment Act labor liaison for the Oregon AFL-CIO. He helps workers who have been displaced by plant closures and downsizings.

In other council action, Jeff Anderson, secretary-treasurer of UFCW Local 555, was the lone nominee for the open seat of second vice president on the labor council's Executive Board. A second nomination will be held Aug. 24.

**Stimulus dollars trickle slowly to union workforce, if at all**By DON McINTOSH  
Associate Editor

Nineteen months after the current recession's official start, and nine months after employment levels fell off a cliff, it can be very hard to see the effects of the federal government stimulus plan announced with so much fanfare earlier this year.

Back in February, elected leaders were falling over each other to announce efforts to use government spending to resuscitate the economy. One February press conference in Portland drew both of Oregon's U.S. senators, plus the Multnomah county chair, members of city council and the Metro regional government, and a school district official. Wyden, the senior and highest ranking elected official, likened the just-passed stimulus package to the New Deal programs that put Americans back to work during the Great Depression.

But it's August, and unemployment has continued to rise. At last count, 9.4 percent of American workers are offi-

cially unemployed (12.1 percent in Oregon and 9.2 percent in Washington.) The statistics are worse in construction, a sector which had nationwide unemployment of 17.4 percent as of June. That's 1.6 million unemployed construction workers, a number that has continued to rise every month.

Have stimulus efforts failed? Were they not enough to begin with? Is another round of stimulus needed, as Machinists Union President Thomas Buffenbarger called for in a June 26 letter to the president?

The federal stimulus package — the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act — had a much-repeated price tag of \$787 billion. That sounds like a lot if you compare it to the roughly \$3 trillion the federal government spends each year, but \$787 billion was the stimulus' estimated cost over a period of up to 10 years.

Of that total, 36 percent wasn't spending at all, but rather tax cuts — to businesses and to individuals.

President Obama's "Make Work Pay" tax cut, for example, lets workers keep an extra \$8 a week to go out and revive the economy. Another 25 percent consisted of what might be termed "relief" — like longer-lasting, more generous unemployment benefits, increased food stamp benefits, and more money for Medicaid, the government health insurance program for low-income individuals.

Then 10 percent went to rescue state and local budgets, to stave off cuts in services and reduce public sector layoffs. That left about 20 percent, \$160 billion, to be spent on infrastructure investments — the sort of "put-people-back-to-work" projects that some people expect when they think of "stimulus."

When the bill was passed, the talk was about "shovel-ready" projects. The Labor Press set out to look for the shovels, starting with unions whose mem-

(Turn to Page 8)

**Washington State Labor Council to mull over political strategy; Democrats at crux of debate**

OLYMPIA — Some Democrats in the state of Washington may find out next year whether there are consequences for backstabbing a core group of supporters.

Gov. Chris Gregoire and the top Democratic leaders of the state House and Senate told leaders of the Washington State Labor Council (WSLC), AFL-CIO, last year that they would support the federation's top-priority — a bill

called the Worker Privacy Act. The bill would bar employers from firing workers who refuse to attend workplace anti-union meetings. But they reneged on that promise, and added public insult to the injury when they announced in a press conference that they had asked state police to investigate an internal WSLC e-mail. Police concluded no laws were broken by the e-mail — which contained notes from a meeting, including a bullet point that seemed to threaten "not another dime" from labor to state Democratic campaign funds if Democrats didn't pass the bill.

But that wasn't all. Democratic majorities refused to pass bills of importance to labor, and passed other bills over labor's objections. Bills failed that would have created a paid family leave benefit for workers, or allowed child care workers, performing artists, or university lecturers to unionize.

Meanwhile, lawmakers gave business a break on unemployment taxes, and passed a state budget that contained

dramatic cuts to schools and services. For organized labor, it was a terrible legislative session.

And that was after unions had poured dollars and volunteer hours into re-electing Gregoire and sending more Democrats to Olympia. Democrats dominate the House 64 to 34 and the Senate 31 to 18. The sweeping betrayal led to months of soul-searching by unionists, and prompted the labor federation to rethink its approach to politics.

Delegates to this week's WSLC convention are considering a number of proposals, including formation of a new political action committee, the "DIME PAC." DIME here stands for "Don't Invest in More Excuses," but it's also a reminder of the phrase "not another dime" from that leaked e-mail. DIME PAC is conceived as a way for unions to target campaign contributions more strategically. No longer is labor likely to contribute to party-wide funds. WSLC spokesperson Kathy Cummings said

(Turn to Page 5)