

State board says union can decide structure for collecting dues

HOOD RIVER — It's none of management's business how a union collects its dues.

That is essentially what the Oregon Employment Relations Board (ERB) told Hood River County in a recent decision that revolved around American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Oregon Council 75's decision to switch to a percentage dues system in 2007.

ERB ruled unanimously that Hood River County violated the Oregon Public Employees Collective Bargaining Act when it refused to implement the union's new dues structure.

Delegates at Council 75's conven-

tion in 2007 voted to switch from a flat rate dues structure to dues equivalent to 1.27 percent of employees' base salary, plus \$3. Hood River County refused to collect dues based on percentage, citing cost and administrative factors.

However, as Council 75 Legal Counsel Jason Weyand contended to the ERB: "... both the collective bargaining agreement [between AFSCME Local 2503 and Hood River County] and ORS 292.055 require that the employer deduct dues from the employees' paychecks. The amount and method of calculation of those dues is determined exclusively by the union, not the employer. The employer is legally bound

to honor that determination."

In a 21-page opinion and order, the ERB agreed, citing numerous related cases. The Board's decision — in a nutshell — is that the union has the right to determine by what method it collects its dues, and the affected agencies must comply.

The ERB charges were filed on behalf of Local 2503, which represents 25 Hood River County Public Works em-

ployees, but the decision also covers another 50 county courthouse workers from AFSCME Local 1082.

"This is a huge decision, not only for our locals in Hood River County, but because of the important precedent it could have set if it had gone the other way," said Oregon AFSCME Executive Director Ken Allen.

The ERB ordered Hood River County to "cease and desist" from re-

fusing to calculate and withhold union dues (and fair share payments) based on AFSCME's percentage formula. In addition, the county was ordered to pay the union for the difference between the dues and fair share payments the union received based on the old method and what dues and fair share fee payments the union should have received if the county had properly deducted the dues using the formula method.

Steelworkers Union organizes recycling firm

Seven weeks after one worker called the Oregon AFL-CIO asking how to unionize, 27 employees at CRT Processing in Clackamas became members of United Steel Workers (USW).

At CRT's 10151 SE Jennifer St. facility in Clackamas, workers earn \$10 an hour disassembling televisions, computers, monitors, and laptops; separating recyclable materials; and crushing cathode ray tubes.

In a Sept. 3 union election overseen by the National Labor Relations Board, they voted 16 to 8 to join USW. Union organizer Pete Passarelli said workers want raises, a wage scale, better health benefits, and better protection against exposure to toxics, such as lead in the

cathode ray tube glass.

CRT, based in Janesville, Wisconsin, hired a Wisconsin law firm to run an anti-union campaign, Passarelli said. Workers were called in for one-on-one meetings with managers. But several local elected leaders got involved, and Passarelli says that boosted pro-union worker enthusiasm, and may have persuaded management to tone down the anti-union campaign.

CRT has the recycling work because of a 2007 "E-Waste" law passed by the Oregon Legislature. The law requires electronics manufacturers to provide free and convenient recycling services, and let them come up with their own way of doing that. This year they

launched the program, in which Goodwill accepts electronics free of charge at its 38 stores and 58 donation centers around the state, and then transports the products to CRT's Clackamas location.

State Sen. Jackie Dingfelder, author of the E-Waste legislation, wrote to workers saying she supported their campaign. State Rep. Brent Barton, whose district CRT is located in, wrote to the company asking that workers be allowed to choose freely whether or not to join the union. And U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley's office sent labor liaison Ed Hall to a support picnic organized by USW locals in Albany.

No bargaining dates were scheduled at press time.




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