

# AFL-CIO urges 'yes' vote on Measures 66 & 67

## Open Forum

### ...Top labor stories of '09

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court date is in January. In December, Fred Meyer was declared the local private sector "Grinch of the Year," by Portland Jobs With Justice. Look for the dispute to continue into 2010 as Local 555 continues to bargain successor agreements to the ones that expired in July 2008 for 5,300 workers, and as building trades-affiliated health trusts close down deals with Kroger pharmacy.

Politically, the high point for labor was the inauguration of Democratic President Barack Obama in January. Top labor leaders were suddenly frequent White House guests after eight years of near-total isolation from the nation's chief executive. Also sworn in was labor ally Jeff Merkley, who replaced Republican Gordon Smith as Oregon's junior U.S. Senator. In February, the Democratic-majority Congress passed economic stimulus legislation that carried a \$787 billion price tag. But Congress was still wrangling over health care reform as the year ended, and had yet to deliver on labor's top priority — the Employee Free Choice Act — or complete work on other pressing issues like climate change and reform of the financial system.

In the State of Washington, top Democrats elected with labor's help caved to business pressure and refused to allow a vote on a workers' rights bill. Washington Governor Chris Gregoire, House Speaker Frank Chopp, and Senate President Lisa Brown even called state police to suggest that a leaked internal memo from the Washington State Labor Council crossed a legal line. The betrayal prompted changes in the way the state's labor movement will approach politics in years to come.

The Oregon Legislature met from January to June, and passed a bill that gives workers the right to refuse to attend workplace anti-union meetings. But on Dec. 22, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Associated Oregon Industries filed suit to stop the new law from taking effect Jan. 1.

Throughout 2009, construction unions were busy lobbying for a new Interstate 5 bridge between Portland and Vancouver that would include six through lanes and six merging lanes, light rail extensions, bike and pedestrian lanes, and interchange improvements. However, several politicians from both Portland and Vancouver have wavered on their support, so lobbying will continue in 2010.

By TOM CHAMBERLAIN

The economy is bad. States are going broke. Need is up. We've all heard the bad news.

But this January, in Oregon, we have the opportunity to create some good news.

For the first time in decades, legislators passed moderate tax increases that will help secure funding for things like education and public safety without hurting middle class Oregonians. In fact, their small increases will only affect 2.5 percent of Oregonians. But without your help these needed measures will be overturned by big corporations who are used to getting special treatment.

Oregon's corporate minimum tax is \$10. In fact, about two-thirds of businesses only pay \$10 a year in taxes — while they depend on the

rest of us to fund education so they have a qualified workforce to draw on, roads so they can ship their products, and other services they depend on every day.

Some wealthy Oregonians and large corporations are still raking in the cash while too many of our friends and neighbors struggle to make ends meet. Meanwhile, the Legislature made \$2 billion in cuts last year, drastically limiting many vital services and asking public employees to take a series of furlough days, and they are facing another \$733 million shortfall.

The solution is the tax package the Legislature passed last spring. But those taxes have been referred to the ballot, and now it's up to you, your friends, neighbors and family members, to vote yes on Measures 66 and 67 this month. Measures 66 and 67

raise the corporate minimum from \$10 to \$150. They ask profitable corporations, corporations with high Oregon sales, and families making over \$250,000 a year to pay a little bit more. If your family makes less than \$250,000 a year (or if you file as an individual and make less than \$125,000) your taxes won't change at all.

These measures are fair. They will preserve jobs, preserve funding for projects that create jobs, and preserve vital services like education, health care, and public safety that we all depend on.

It's time corporations and the very rich pay their fair share.

That's why the Oregon AFL-CIO endorsed Measures 66 and 67. That's why I'm joining labor leaders from across the state in voting "yes" on

Measures 66 and 67.

But I can't do it alone. We need you to look for your ballot later this month and make sure to return it by Tuesday, Jan. 26. And we need you to spread the word. Talk to your friends and family. Talk to your co-workers. Make sure they know why you're voting "yes" for Oregon this month.

If you need more information about the ballot measures, you can check the Oregon AFL-CIO Web site at [www.oraficio.org](http://www.oraficio.org), read more about it in the Oregon AFL-CIO Weekly Update, or go to the campaign Web site at [www.voteyesfororegon.org](http://www.voteyesfororegon.org).

Thanks for joining me in protecting the things that make Oregon special!

(Editor's Note: Tom Chamberlain is president of the Oregon AFL-CIO.)

## Oregon deserves better than a jobless recovery

To The Editor:

Since the 1980s, a lack of a national forest plan is a major reason Oregon has had 200 timber mills close, causing 50,000 people to lose their jobs.

Rural Oregon has been economically ruined. Almost every rural town had a lumber mill. Now, most are gone.

Rural counties have been providing services for their citizens by using federal timber monies that in 2012 will cease. Oregon will have to keep these counties afloat.

We have lost thousands of aluminum jobs as plants closed. Over half of our paper and pulp mills have closed, costing thousands of jobs. Our major steel plants have closed, costing thousands of jobs. Heavy construction has lost thousands of jobs. Machine manufacturing plants have closed, costing thousands of jobs. Computer high-tech has lost thousands of jobs. Transportation manufacturing has lost thousands of jobs. Oregon has lost thousands of food processing jobs.

The sad part is: we are STILL LOSING JOBS. Roughly 120,000 since November 2007.

These lost jobs were the backbone of Oregon's industrial work sector. These workers were the primary state, county, and city taxpayers. Oregon has created over 70,000 public-sector jobs during this time period, further putting a strain on state budgets.

During the 1980 recession, almost all these industrial facilities and jobs were still in place, and when these workers returned from layoffs or curtailed hours and went back to work, Oregon had no problem pulling out of the recession.

Oregon's unemployed now number over 200,000 when you count the ones that have quit looking for work or who are working part time earning lower wages.

One out of six Oregonians is receiving food stamps. Oregon needs to put 150,000 people back to work earning decent wages now. We can't wait three

to four years, as some experts project for this jobless recovery.

None of these so-called experts have missed a paycheck yet. We have lost a large majority of these jobs to other states and trade agreements with foreign nations. This has to stop.

If we had a national forest plan we could put thousands back to work doing forest restoration, thinning and logging and perhaps even put a few small mills back on line in our rural areas, helping our rural counties become self-sufficient once again.

We need bridges. Let's build them.

We need dependable high-speed train service instead of pouring billions of dollars into Amtrak.

We need to ensure that we have highways to handle our traffic needs. We start these projects and the federal government will step in to help finance.

We need to build the ocean cargo container facility at Coos Bay, putting 2,000 people to work.

We need to follow the lead of Idaho

and Washington and insure we have additional irrigation water to create tens of thousands of additional farm acres in central and eastern Oregon growing food products for America and the world.

This would create thousands of jobs.

The first step to accomplish these goals is to take the ideas of the Oregon Business Council to put people back to work, form a task force of business and labor folks to put these and other ideas to work, and make sure our elected officials understand this needs to be done, and done now.

Again, Oregonians deserve better than a jobless recovery plan. The only recovery plan that will work is to put Oregonians back to work now.

**Bill J. Kluting**  
Carpenters Industrial Council  
Monmouth

## U.S. Congress should require 'Sunshine Vote'

To The Editor:

Recently, Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., stated: "I can't count 60 votes in the Senate for a public option, so I'm going to vote 'no.'"

If we had a rule that required a "Sunshine Vote," he would have said: "I have to acknowledge the thousands of dollars I have received from the insurance, pharmaceutical, and drug companies and, therefore, I am voting 'no' on this public option."

I sure hope you all still believe in "government of the people, by the people, for the people."

**John Theodore**  
AFSCME  
Retired  
Salem

## The labor of our hands and the case for unions

To The Editor:

The history of organized labor is a story of the human spirit against the greedy nature of man. A nature that wants to oppress the weak and to enrich itself at the expense of another.

The extreme of this is slavery. Since the dawn of recorded history, slavery tells the dark side of human nature, and it still exists in parts of the world, but even with slavery outlawed in our country, people are building vast fortunes on the backs of hard working people. (There is nothing wrong with being in business.)

These craftsmen built the dreams of our nation and industry without always

sharing in the fruits of their labors. This must stop. The Bible warns that those greedy souls who withhold wages from whom wages are due are wrong. They will have to give an account for their greedy actions.

Over the years, the labor movement has grown and with that growth has been the wise development of training schools, thus bringing up a new generation of highly skilled workers, applying new technology, making them the most productive workforce in the world. This is the place where the laborer/craftsman needs labor-management, the union workers' representation. One person alone is powerless, but

together we can share in the prosperity of our industry and our nation.

Thank you, labor organizers and representatives, for all you do for us, your members. Please remember the ones that stand with you! May we not be guilty of greed like the ones we have fought against, but be a workforce and a management team that is ready to do the job of quality and quantity in production at a living wage.

Thanks for listening to just one worker.

**Earl R. Carlton Jr.**  
Sheet Metal Workers 16  
Madras