Local Motion

January 2010

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	Results: Union No
First Student 1/7	Oregon School Employees Assoc.	L. Oswego	29	6
Oregon Housing & Assoc. Services (decertification) 1/7	ATU Local 757	Canby	13	9
Columbia Distributing (decertification) 1/15	Teamsters Local 162	Portland	1	14

Recognition by card check

Name of employer / Date	Name of union	Location / Number of employees
Annex School District (classified staff & PT teachers) 7/28	Oregon Education Association	Ontario 6

Requests for recognition election

Name of employer / Name of union	Location / Number of employees
Swire Coca-Cola (decertification) Teamsters Local 670	Pendleton 17
Laurelhurst Village (decertification) Service Employees International Union Local 503	Portland 155
Providence Home Health & Hospice Oregon Nurses Association	Portland 17
Maranatha Natural Foods United Food & Commercial Workers Local 555	Ashland 35

Card-check challenge results in ballot vote at Laurelhurst Village

Last November, Portland-headquartered Farmington Centers agreed to recognize Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 503 as the exclusive bargaining agent for workers at Laurelhurst Village, its Southeast Portland nursing home.

The union recognition came after a neutral third party certified that a majority of the workers had signed union authorization cards. Under U.S. labor law, such "card-check" recognition is a legal way for workers to unionize, though the employer has the choice whether to insist instead on a workplace union election. In this case, the employer agreed to card-check after community pressure, and did so as part of joining an industry partnership with the union.

But thanks to a legal interpretation by the Bush-era National Labor Relations Board, card check isn't the final word: A minority of 30 percent of employees can call for an election if they disagree with their employer's decision to recognize a union — even though an absolute majority of their co-workers may have signed cards.

A worker at Laurelhurst Village filed such a petition Jan. 19, and an election was scheduled Feb. 16, after this issue went to press. The election result will be reported in the March 5 issue of the Northwest Labor Press.

SEIU Local 503 spokesperson Ed Hershey said bargaining had begun, but as a practical matter would be put on hold until after the election result.

Labor: Corporations aren't people

AFL-CIO, Change to Win criticize Supreme Court campaign finance ruling

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) — AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka and Change To Win Chair Anna Burger criticized the U.S. Supreme Court's 5-4 ruling opening the political advertising floodgates to cascades of corporate campaign cash, even though the AFL-CIO's earlier legal brief on the issue sided with the corporate complainers on free speech grounds.

Trumka's statement came after the decision by five Republican-named justices threw out virtually all limits on corporate spending on elections, except for direct contributions to candidates. Corporations can now buy ads backing or opposing politicians.

One limit the court majority tossed was a ban on corporate or union-funded independent issue advertising ("call senator so-and-so and tell him to vote against such-and-such") within 30 days of a primary or 60 days of a General Election.

Groups ranging from the right-wing Citizens United to the ACLU asked the justices to invalidate the independent ad ban. So did the AFL-CIO.

But Trumka said corporate speech, controlled by company officers, should be viewed differently from speech by unions, which he said are democratically controlled by their members. The rest of the AFL-CIO brief was silent on the larger campaign finance questions the court ruled on.

In his statement, Trumka was anything but silent.

"The Supreme Court further tilted the playing field in favor of business corporations in public elections. By allowing unlimited corporate treasury expenditures that explicitly support or oppose particular candidates, the court

Richard Trumka

increased the already excessive influence corporations exert in our electoral system," Trumka declared.

"We believe the court wrongly treated corporate expenditures the same as union expenditures, contrary to the arguments we made in our brief. Unions, unlike businesses, are democratically-controlled, nonprofit membership organizations representing working men and women across the country, and their independent speech should accordingly be given greater protection," he added.

Trumka reiterated the AFL-CIO's support for "campaign finance regulation that promotes democratic participation in elections," possible public financing of election campaigns, tight regulation of campaign contributions, protection of "legitimate independent speech rights" and "effective disclosure of who is paying for what."

Change To Win Chair Burger predicted corporations would drown out everybody else with their money.

"The court lifted the floodgates ... on corporate electoral activity in the name of the 'free speech rights' of corporations — meaning if you are a CEO or corporate official, you are now free to hit the corporate ATM and spend whatever of your shareholders' money it takes to elect the candidates of your choice," she said.

"Unlimited corporate spending in federal elections threatens to drown out voices of the people who should really be at the center of the political process: Voters and candidates. Corporations have already been shilling out a lot of cash for political activities," via "attack ads, direct mail and other forms of public communication through PACs." The court "has given corporate managers the green light to bypass the checks and balances, use unlimited amounts from the general treasury" for politics, she added.

Bargaining opens between DCTU, City of Portland

Bargaining for a new contract began Jan. 25 between the City of Portland and the District Council of Trade Unions (DCTU).

The DCTU represents approximately 1,600 employees from seven unions, including American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 189, Laborers Local 483, Electrical Workers Local 48, Operating Engineers Local 701, Painters District Council 5, Plumbers and Fitters Local 290, and Machinists Lodge 1005.

The two sides will use a format called interest-based bargaining, a negotiation strategy in which the parties collaborate to find a "win-win" solution to any dispute they might have.

The current four-year agreement expires June 30.