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Rallying to save Saturday mail delivery

Protesting a proposed end to Saturday mail delivery, employees of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) held a picket and rally July 1 outside Portland's main post office. The rally came one day after the Postal Regulatory Commission reported that the Civil Service Retirement System has overcharged USPS more than \$50 billion over the last 37 years. USPS faces a severe budget shortfall due to a requirement that it "pre-fund" future retiree healthcare benefits — at a cost of over \$5 billion a year for 10 years. To help restore USPS to financial health, postal unions and other stakeholders have been urging Congress to relieve that pre-funding burden, which no other government agency or private business has. In Portland, picketers heard words of support from Oregon's top elections official, Oregon Secretary of State Kate Brown, who donned a T-shirt emblazoned with "Five day is the wrong way." The Portland rally was sponsored by American Postal Workers Union Portland-area local, National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 82, and National Postal Mail Handlers Union Local 315.

Workers ink three-year deal at Daimler Trucks

By DON McINTOSH
Associate Editor

Union workers at the Daimler Trucks North America factory in Portland agreed to a new set of three-year contracts in the opening days of July, after the company dropped demands for wage concessions and "two-tier" contract terms that would have provided for less generous treatment of new hires and recalled workers.

The 640 workers — who make Western Star heavy trucks and Freightliner military trucks — are members of Machinists Lodge 1005, Teamsters Local 305, Sign Painters and Paint Makers Local 1094, and Service Employees Local 49. The unions bargain together but ratify contracts separately.

Daimler, formerly known as Freightliner LLC, is a truck subsidiary of German auto-maker Daimler AG.

The contracts held the line on pay, despite hints that Daimler could close the Portland plant if workers didn't agree to wage givebacks.

"I think management understood that this membership was very united and not in a mood for wage conces-

sions," said Joe Kear, business representative of Machinists District Lodge 24. Lodge 1005 is the largest of the four union groups at Daimler, with 430 members at the truck plant. Kear said workers had nearly a year to get used to the idea of a closure, because Daimler announced in late 2008 it would shutter the plant when existing union contracts expired June 30, 2010. Once the company cancelled the planned closure, future threats of closure didn't have the same punch.

Bargaining over new contracts began in November, and broke off in January. Daimler was asking for wage cuts of up to \$5 an hour, and \$6 an hour less for workers recalled after layoff. At one point the union bargain-

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New law gives defined benefit pension plans breathing room

A new law will give pension plans more time to make up for investment losses from the 2008 financial market downturn. HR 3962, signed into law by President Barack Obama June 25, will take pressure off "defined benefit" pension plans, which in the last year have had to ramp up employer contributions and cut back benefits.

The law gives multi-employer pension plans 30 years to make up for those losses; before, they had 15 years.

It also allows them to recognize (or "smooth") the losses, for accounting purposes, over a 10-year period; previously losses had to be recognized over a five-year period. That change means that some plans that were healthy before the downturn can avoid declaring "critical" or "endangered" funding status; those actuarial designations force trustees to cut benefits and raise employer contributions.

"We've accomplished here what

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Burns named director of Labor's Community Service Agency

Vickie Burns has been hired as executive director of Labor's Community Service Agency (LCSA). She succeeds Glenn Shuck, who retired June 1 after 25 years with the agency. Burns has been office manager at LCSA since 1993 and has served as interim director since Shuck's retirement.

Labor's Community Service Agency is a non-profit organization funded primarily by United Way of the Columbia-Willamette. It operates under the auspices of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council and a 16-person board of directors. The agency works with an array of community-based and governmental organizations throughout Oregon and Southwest Washington to provide education, information, referral services, and social service programs.

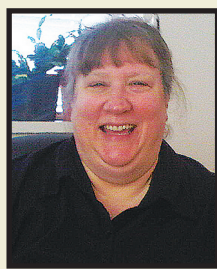
Burns has hit the ground running as director. She revamped the agency's Helping Hands program to make it easier for union officials to refer members in need; she had a booth at the recent Yellow Ribbon Career & Benefits Fair for veterans

at Clackamas Community College; and she is part of a rapid response team called in to assist public employees who will soon lose their jobs due to massive budget shortfalls.

She is also in the process of launching a new web site and Facebook page (neither of which have vanity names at this point).

"My goal is to get the agency involved in more social programs," Burns said. "Yes, labor is about good wages and good benefits, but we're also part of the community. I want to help show that off." Burns says any local with a pet project should contact her for assistance in promoting the event or helping find volunteers.

An Oregon native, Burns graduated from Jackson High School before attending Mt. Hood Com-



VICKIE BURNS

munity College (MHCC) and Portland Community College, where she earned associate degrees in technical/professional writing and computers and office management. She was working as an administrative aide at MHCC's Dislocated Workers Project in 1994 when the newly-hired Shuck recruited her to be his office manager. In that job she became a member of Office and Professional Employees Local 11. She is active in the union, serving on its Executive Board, as a shop steward, and on the bargaining committee. However, as executive director she must relinquish membership. She will remain an associate member of Local 11.

Burns grew up in a union family. Her father was a member of Teamsters Local 162 at Cascade Construction and her mother was a member of Bakers Local 114 at Sunshine Bakery.

Labor's Community Service Agency is located at 1125 SE Madison, Suite 103-B, Portland. The phone number is 503-231-4962. The dedicated phone line for Helping Hands is 503-235-5686. The web site is: <http://csain1001.qwestoffice.net/>.