

Inside

MEETING NOTICES

See
Page 4

NORTHWEST

LABOR
PRESS

Volume 111

Number 23

December 3, 2010
Portland, OregonTurning up the
holiday spirit

A sure sign that the holiday season is near is the presence of volunteer electricians from IBEW Local 48 getting The Grotto in Northeast Portland ready for its annual

Festival of Lights. As they have done for the past 23 years, electricians mounted panels and assembled temporary power boxes that supply power to more than half a million lights and fiber-optic and animated displays in a walk-through depiction of the story of the birth of Christ. Sixty-five union members, their families, and friends volunteered this year. Among them were members J.R. Robertson (photo above) and Oscar Merida and Jessica Ford (photo left). Union contractors of the National Electrical Contractors Association donated equipment. The Festival of Lights is open nightly through Dec. 30 from 5 to 9:30 p.m. General admission is \$8. Kids under 12 get in for \$4. Canned food donations also are being collected. The Grotto is located at NE 85th and Sandy Boulevard, Portland.

Poor economy leads
to layoffs at OR-OSHA

SALEM —The Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OR-OSHA) has laid off 10 employees so far this year, including longtime labor liaison David Sparks.

The agency — which inspects workplaces to make sure they're safe — gets three quarters of its funding from a 4 percent tax on employers' workers compensation premiums. That means Oregon OSHA's budget is very sensitive to employment levels, especially in hazardous occupations like construction, which have higher workers' comp premiums. In this recession, revenues from the workers' comp assessment have declined as much as one-third.

No field inspectors have been laid off, however, though one in six inspector positions is vacant and unfilled. Total staff at Oregon OSHA is now about 180. The layoffs took place in spring, summer, and in October, and included three managers, four safety trainers, an office manager, receptionist, and analyst.

Sparks, 64, was one of the managers

laid off, after more than 25 years at Oregon OSHA. Sparks was at one time a union business rep for Teamsters Local 670, under Teamster leader L.B. Day. After his October layoff, Sparks began a new job as manager at the Oregon Health Licensing Agency. His Oregon OSHA responsibilities were divided among remaining managers, including Oregon OSHA Director Michael Wood.

Oregon OSHA spokesperson Melanie Mesaros said the agency is striving to maintain effectiveness despite the layoffs. There are fewer field inspectors — but also fewer workplaces to inspect — especially in high-hazard jobs like construction, logging, and manufacturing. To make up for having fewer safety trainers, the agency is offering more safety classes online.

The Oregon OSHA layoffs are part of a larger reduction of force throughout state government. Mesaros said the Department of Consumer & Business Services, of which Oregon OSHA is a part, has had 65 layoffs so far this year.

Mohlis, Byrd named to governor-elect's transition team

John Kitzhaber is already working to prepare economic development and job creation proposals for legislative action, jobs next summer

Oregon Governor-elect John Kitzhaber has named Barbara Byrd and John Mohlis as team leaders of his Economic Development transition team. Byrd is secretary-treasurer of the Oregon AFL-CIO and Mohlis is executive secretary of the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council.

Kitzhaber campaigned on job creation, so as his first order of business even before taking office, he announced the creation of five teams assigned specific tasks aimed at helping grow Oregon's economy. Each team has been charged with developing statutory and regulatory recommendations for the

legislative session that begins Feb. 1.

"I said during the campaign that I would be ready to start on day one — and this is day one — day one of our effort to put Oregon back to work," Kitzhaber said. "I intend to pull Oregon together and begin the necessary work to create jobs and get the private sector economy moving. And just as I said during the campaign, I cannot do this alone. I need the help of Oregonians from across the state to achieve our goals during the legislative session and throughout my administration."

Byrd will join Maurice Rahming, president of O'Neill Electric, and Margaret Kirkpatrick, vice president and general counsel of NW Natural, as leaders of the Energy Efficiency Team. The team is charged with developing a legislative proposal to fund large energy efficiency retrofit projects on public buildings. The goal is to create a funding mechanism by bonding against projected energy savings of the retrofits.

O'Neill Electric is a union shop and



JOHN MOHLIS

member of the National Electrical Contractors Association. NW Natural crews work under a collective bargaining agreement with Office and Professional Employees Local 11.

"Such an effort can be done a number of different ways and over different timelines, but the bottom line is this: By immediately saving state dollars that



BARBARA BYRD

would otherwise go to paying for energy-related costs, there will be an available revenue stream that is freed up for repayment," Kitzhaber said.

The goal is to have the program up and running by next summer.

Mohlis will join John Carter, chairman of the board of Schnitzer Steel, as leaders of the Manufacturing Team. The

team will focus first on policy changes that will assist existing manufacturers in a way that will boost the per capita income of Oregonians, with a secondary focus of attracting new manufacturers to Oregon.

Other transition teams announced by Kitzhaber will focus on economic development, biomass, and workforce development.

The Economic Development team is charged with developing proposals to better connect Oregon-based businesses with sources of investment and private capital. Team leaders are State Treasurer Ted Wheeler and Wally Van Valkenberg, managing partner of Stoel Rives and chair of the Oregon Business Development Commission.

The Biomass team is charged with both short term and long term plans for a more robust and diverse bio-energy industry in the state. This includes increasing demand for woody biomass in the short term, and a long term strategy

(Turn to Page 7)