



WSLC President Rick Bender (right) shares a laugh with Secretary-Treasurer Al Link at the state labor federation's convention in 2009. Both union officials retired at the end of 2010.

...WSLC passes the baton

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teered from an early age on door-to-door union political campaigns: His father was Spokane Democratic Party chairman, and his mother was political director of the Spokane Labor Council. Link was drafted and spent 1967 and 1968 in Vietnam in an army engineering group. He returned to the Kaiser mill, became active in the union, and served many terms as vice president before running for president in 1992. Link became WSLC secretary-treasurer in 1994.

Of their years together at WSLC, both Bender and Link say the high point was 1993, when the union movement won numerous victories in the State Legislature — such as beefed-up workers' compensation and unemployment benefits, and expanded rights for public employees to unionize. The low point came the following year, when Republicans swept to power at the state and national levels. That 1994 election ended the 30-year career of a labor ally — Eastern Washington Congressman Tom Foley, who was Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. Still, WSLC helped return Democrats to power in Olympia a few years later, and won some victories at the ballot box, most notably a 1998 measure that raised the minimum wage and tied future increases to the consumer price index. That made Washington the first state to index annual minimum wage increases to inflation; 10 other states have followed, including Oregon.

A retirement party to honor Bender and Link will be held Jan. 8 at the Seattle Airport Doubletree Hotel. Their successors were sworn in Jan. 5.

Jeff Johnson, 59, has been on the WSLC staff for 24 years. He first taught labor economics and labor history to apprentices at IBEW Local 3 in New York, after earning a master's degree in political economics from the New

School of Social Research. Then he spent two years as a labor studies professor at the State University of New York-Empire State College. He moved to Olympia and went to work for WSLC as research and organizing director and lobbyist, battling in the State Capitol to promote and defend workers' rights. In 1988, he helped write a ballot measure that raised the minimum wage from \$2.30 to \$4.25 and extended it to farm workers. And in 1998, he laid the groundwork for the ballot measure that indexed the minimum wage to inflation. Somewhere in the neighborhood of 300,000 workers get a raise every year because of it.

Lynne Dodson, 49, is new to WSLC. A psychology professor at Seattle Central Community College, Dodson decided in 1997 to get involved with her union, American Federation of Teachers Local 1789, after she saw a co-worker retire after 25 years with nothing but an "emeritus" award. Dodson grew up in Inchelium, Washington, on the Colville Indian Reservation, where her mother, a teacher, had been active in her union. Dodson, WSLC's first female executive officer, has a passion for social justice and a PhD in social welfare from the University of Washington.

President Johnson and Secretary-Treasurer Dodson have an ambitious vision for WSLC. They want to build up the capacity to educate members, to counter the ideology that put Wall Street first and left working America behind. They want to make organized labor more appealing to younger workers, rebuild labor's communications infrastructure, and rekindle a union culture based on the principle of solidarity. And they want to strengthen labor's alliance with other movements, showing Washingtonians that unions aren't just about defending their own members — they're about building power to win economic and social justice for all working people.

...Donations pour in for holiday events

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rated the labor community with announcements at every meeting," Burns said.

Within days of the initial appeal, donations arrived for holiday dinners. Marc Levy, president of United Way of the Columbia-Willamette, provided special-use funds as a cornerstone for the dinner efforts. Monetary contributions came pouring in, some on behalf of local unions, some from members and staff. LCSA's workforce development partner, Worksystems, Inc., passed the hat, too.

"All were made with a determination to help labor's struggling families," Burns said.

In December, the toy drive took shape. Union organizations, members, and families brought in toys galore. Others thought it best to leave the shopping to someone else, and helped out with cash donations.

Madison's Restaurant offered the Nase Building event hall, with holiday décor, staffing, and beverages included, at a rock-bottom rate. Brad Nase followed suit, lending an empty suite of offices to store and set up toys for Santa's workshop. The local Dominos Pizza gave a bulk rate of \$5 per pie, and Terry Lansing, secretary-treasurer of Bakers Local 114, donated two gigantic union-made cakes for dessert. To top it all off, Darice and Jay Robinson of Hollywood Impress Printing provided 300 hand-packed goody bags for Santa to distribute at the party, and Tim Foster of IBEW Local 48 offered up free Christmas trees from his own tree farm.



A father and son decide what toy to pick during "Presents from Partners" holiday party Dec. 19 hosted by Labor's Community Service Agency and the Northwest Oregon Labor Council. All told, 73 union families (219 kids) received toys, visited Santa Claus, and enjoyed pizza and cake.

When the toys were sorted and arranged for the Dec. 19 party, they filled five office rooms. The final count was over 2,000 toys for boys, girls, tweens, teens, and toddlers.

On the day of the event, dozens of volunteer "elves" and "reindeer" welcomed appreciative families. They offered activity books and helped kids chose from Santa's "stocking stuff." They guided families to the event hall, helped with seating and serving, brought families to visit and take free pictures with Santa & Mrs. Claus, then led kids to Santa's workshop, helping them choose four presents each.

Leftover toys were donated to the Department of Human Services offices in downtown Portland for foster children and kids removed from their par-

ents and homes, to women's shelters, and to disabled children.

All told, LCSA distributed Holiday Dinner Program gift cards to 65 families across 15 local unions. Seventy-three families (219 kids, 342 people, from 26 local unions) were lifted up through the "Presents from Partners" program. Additionally, LCSA had enough funds to sponsor two holiday luncheons for dislocated workers at local WorkSource offices.

"The outpouring of support this holiday season was a gift from and for working people and organized labor," Burns said. "It was a combined effort of unions, community partners, and local businesses (too numerous to list) a display of solidarity, an inspiration, and a resounding success."



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