

Working Families Party to host forum on proposed Oregon State Bank

2011 Legislature will consider legislation to create publicly-owned bank

The Working Families Party of Oregon, in partnership with the Oregonians for a State Bank coalition, will hold a forum on Feb. 1, from 5:30 to 8 p.m. at New Song Community Church, 2511 NE Martin Luther King Blvd., Portland.

Two years ago over 800 people gathered in Portland to strategize a unified, local response to the unfolding economic crisis. One idea to emerge from

that gathering was to work for the creation of a state bank modeled after the highly successful, 91-year-old Bank of North Dakota.

Currently the State of Oregon deposits billions of its tax receipts into the very same "too big to fail banks" that crashed the global economy. The Working Families Party proposal to create the Oregon State Bank would instead move that money into a publicly owned bank accountable to the citizens of Oregon, and which would partner with local community banks to get credit flowing to small businesses and family farmers once again.

"This state bank proposal is generat-

ing widespread, bi-partisan support," said Barbara Dudley, co-chair of the Oregon Working Families Party. "We can't afford to let our economy be held hostage to the whims of distant financial markets, and the Oregon State Bank is a huge step toward creating a local economy that serves working people, not Wall Street."

The forum will focus on the history and outline of the state bank proposal, discussing the need for a state bank, and looking at the path to creating such an institution in the 2011 legislative session. The event will feature speakers from the Working Families Party, Oregon Action/Main Street Alliance, and others.

Others forums are slated throughout the state over the next couple of months.

The first is in Medford, Tuesday, Jan. 25, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Medford Public Library, 205 S. Central Ave.

On Saturday, Feb. 26, a forum will be held starting at 2 p.m. at the Salem Senior Center, 2615 Portland Rd. NE.

Another forum will be held in Eugene on Thursday, March 3, at Harris Hall, 125 E. 8th Ave., starting at 6 p.m.

Additional information about the campaign can be found online at: <http://oregoniansforastatebank.org/>.



Rallying for jobs

Toby Green of Laborers Local 483 joined a dozen unemployed Oregonians and several community leaders at a rally Jan. 10 in downtown Portland to call on the new Congress to enact a federal jobs program and to extend unemployment benefits for the long-term jobless. Dubbed "the 99ers" because they have been unemployed for more than 99 weeks and have lost their insurance benefits, Green said workers cannot sit idly by and wait for help. He said it was the strength of unemployed workers in the 1930s that led to creation of public works programs that created hundreds of thousands of jobs building bridges and roads and restoring and developing natural resources. "This did not happen from some act of God or benevolence on the part of President Franklin Roosevelt," Green said. "These workers organized themselves to demand these programs." Loren Spencer of Portland said she has reached the 99-week limit on benefits and is now without an income. "I desperately want to work, but there just aren't enough jobs," she said. "I'm concerned that I won't be able to put a roof over my head, and Congress is talking about taking away safety net benefits from those who most desperately need them. We need a federal jobs program, since big business is no longer interested in investing in our economy." Rallygoers called on labor to organize massive demonstrations at cities across the country to demand that government create a jobs program, paid for by taxes on Wall Street and the super-rich, who now pay taxes at a far lower rate than average workers. "We must never forget that it was Wall Street that caused this crisis," Green said. The rally was sponsored by Portland Jobs with Justice and the Sunnyside Self-Help Employment Group.

'Solution to Resolution' topic of LERA breakfast

"The Solution to Resolution" will be the topic of discussion at the Jan. 25 breakfast program sponsored by the Oregon Labor Employment Relations Association. Labor attorney Mike Tedesco and management attorney Todd Lyon will answer questions and offer advice on how to prepare each side for a final settlement.

The breakfast begins at 7:30 a.m. at Clackamas Community College in

Wilsonville, 29353 Town Center Loop East. Cost is \$35 — \$25 if you pay for a membership to LERA.

Questions and registrations can be directed by e-mail to info@oregonlera.org, or call Jim Bailey at 503-819-4071.

LERA is an organization that brings labor, management, neutrals and academics together to improve labor-management relations.

Porter appointed to Commission on Senior Services

Verna Porter of the Oregon Alliance for Retired Americans, a partner organization of the AFL-CIO, has been appointed to the Governor's Commission on Senior Services.

The commission is charged with finding ways to enhance and protect the quality of life for older Oregonians, working to ensure that they have access to services that provide choice, independence and dignity.

Porter is a retired nurse and member of the Oregon Nurses Association who specialized in geriatric nursing the last few years of her career. She has served as secretary-treasurer of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union's Columbia River Pensioners and is a lobbyist for the Oregon State Council for Retired Citizens and United Seniors of Oregon.

Porter said her primary focus on the commission will be home health care. "The Service Employees organized home health care workers, and the state has put into place regulations so that now home health care providers must have some training and be licensed," Porter said. "Home health care is such a vital service and now seniors know who is giving that care."



VERNA PORTER



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Take precautions when booking meetings at Northwest hotels

UNITE HERE, the union that represents hotel workers, is trying to get the word out about the possibility of labor disputes when contracts expire this summer at Portland and Seattle hotels.

Unions and pro-union groups traditionally support union workers by scheduling meetings and conferences at unionized facilities. But that can get tricky if the workers end up on strike or boycotting their employer, as they have in several recent contract disputes with the Hilton hotel chain.

Karly Edwards, deputy trustee of Portland-based UNITE HERE Local 9, suggests that conference planners negotiate "force majeure" language in contracts with hotels. Depending on how they're worded, such clauses can prevent organizations from losing deposits or having to pay cancellation fees if they cancel because of a labor dispute. Sample language is available at www.unitehere8.org.

Inmex, a UNITE HERE-supported non-profit that was founded in 2006, can also help. Inmex, which stands for Informed Meetings Exchange, provides a number of resources for meeting planners at www.inmex.org, and helps users select socially-responsible hotels.

Contracts covering about 400 workers expire June 30 and July 31 at the four unionized hotels in the Portland-area: the Benson, Paramount, Hilton Portland & Executive Tower, and Hilton Vancouver, Washington. And contracts covering 1,400 workers at seven Seattle-area hotels and meeting spaces expire at the end of May, June, and July. Those are: The Westin Hotel Seattle, The Edgewater Hotel, Seattle Hilton, Washington Athletic Club, Space Needle Sky City Restaurant, Doubletree Hotel Seattle Airport, and Hilton Seattle Airport and Conference Center.

In October 2010, UNITE HERE struck Hilton hotels in Chicago, Honolulu, and San Francisco before reaching agreements on new contracts.

"It's important that hotel workers not be locked into recession-era contracts, and locked out of the recovery," said Eric Van Rossum, secretary-treasurer of Seattle-based UNITE HERE Local 8.

As the recession took hold, hotel workers suffered layoffs, hours cuts, and workload increases, Van Rossum said, but hotel business has bounced back since its 2009 low point and is on track for full recovery in 2012 and 2013.