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Legislative conference for union members

State Sen. Betsy Johnson, (D-Scappoose), (center wearing scarf) talks with union members during lunch at the Oregon AFL-CIO Legislative Conference Feb. 5 at the Sheet Metal Workers Local 16 hall in Northeast Portland. The conference, which drew nearly 100 union members, reviewed labor's legislative priorities, shared ideas on how unions can work together across sectors to create change, and provided activists access to labor-friendly lawmakers and elected officials. Speakers included Attorney General John Kroger, State Treasurer Ted Wheeler, Secretary of State Kate Brown, and Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian.

Union pension fund invests \$22M in Coquille hospital

Project will be financed by the AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust and built by union workers

COQUILLE — Union pension funds will be used to help build a new \$30 million hospital in Coquille.

The AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust (HIT) is investing \$22 million to construct a 60,000-square-foot, three-story building adjacent to Coquille Valley Hospital. The new facility has been designated a "critical access hospital" because of the need for medical care in the timber and farming community located 81 miles southwest of Eugene.

The new hospital will be roughly double the size of the existing structure. It will have 18 beds with private rooms and house primary medical departments, including surgery, obstetrics,

therapy, laboratory, a pharmacy, an emergency room, and room for expansion of out patient programs. A 9,000-square-foot covered parking structure also is in the blueprint.

The construction project will be 100 percent union-built under a project labor agreement between the Lane, Coos, Curry, Douglas Building Trades Council and The Neenan Company, a Colorado-based design/build firm. It is expected to create approximately 225 construction jobs.

The project couldn't come at a better time, as unemployment in the union construction trades in the region sits at nearly 40 percent, according to Pat Smith, secretary-treasurer of the Building Trades Council.

"Our members appreciate that the AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust will invest in this project and provide

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RALLY FOR JOBS

The steps of the State Capitol • Noon • March 7th, 2011

Training will start at 11:00am in Basement A of the Public Service Building
255 Capitol St. NE, Salem (Across from the Capitol)

Fact: Oregon's unemployment rate has been over 10% since 2008.

Fact: Last year Oregon's underemployment rate was estimated at over 20%.

Fact: Job creation is a non-partisan issue.

Good jobs are the foundation of a good economy.

Good jobs *should* be every elected official's issue.

But too many legislators *talk* about good jobs without making it happen.

This legislative session it *must* happen.

Because Oregon can't afford unemployment any longer, and neither can we.

Demand good jobs for every sector, across Oregon. Support jobs legislation that will bring all workers up.

For more information, please contact Chris Hewitt: Chris@orafcio.org or (503) 287-3114

King's dream of economic justice is yet to be realized

Decades after his death, nearly every American political movement would like to claim Martin Luther King Jr. as its own. The labor movement may do so with some credibility. Among members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the Baptist minister is a kind of patron saint: He was martyred by an assassin's bullet in Memphis, where he had campaigned in support of a strike by black sanitation workers.

In fact, King had a long relationship with organized labor. He sought union support for civil rights campaigns, challenged labor to fight discrimination in its ranks, and came out time after time to defend striking union members.

Michael Honey, a professor of labor and ethnic studies and American history at University of Washington, Tacoma, has written three books on King's relationship to labor and the cause of economic justice. The latest, published January 2011, is "All Labor Has Dignity," an edited collection of King's speeches about economic justice. The book got its start when Honey found half a dozen never-before-published "labor speeches" in a file at King Center in Atlanta.

King has for too long been pigeonholed as a civil rights leader, Honey says, when in truth the mature King might be better understood as a human rights leader. In a 1967 speech to the Teamsters, King described the 1964 Civil Rights Act

and the 1965 Voting Rights Act as the first phase of the freedom struggle, in which blacks won what should have been theirs to begin with as American citizens.

"He never saw that as an end," Honey said. "He saw it as a beginning."

It's clear reading "All Labor Has Dignity" that King's agenda for economic justice remains unfinished.

The following excerpt is from King's speech to the Fourth Constitutional Convention of the AFL-CIO, meeting in Miami Beach, Florida, Dec. 11, 1961.

"Less than a century ago the laborer had no rights, little or no respect, and led a life which was socially submerged and barren. He was hired and fired by economic despots whose power over him decreed his life or death...."

Victor Hugo, literary genius of that day, commented bitterly that there was always more misery in the lower classes than there was humanity in the upper classes. The inspiring answer to this intolerable and dehumanizing existence was economic organization through trade unions. The worker became determined not to wait for charitable impulses to grow in his employer. He constructed the means by which a fairer sharing of the fruits of his toil had to be given to him or the wheels of industry, which he alone turned, would halt and wealth for

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