

Voting opens on airport screeners union recognition

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) — Voting began March 9 on whether 40,000 transportation security officers (TSOs) — also known as airport screeners — will approve a union as their bargaining representative.

The month-long voting gives the TSOs a choice between AFL-CIO affiliate American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), the independent National Treasury Employees

Union or “no union.”

It’s one of the biggest U.S. organizing drives in years.

AFL-CIO Organizing Director Elizabeth Bunn said the federation, which issued a statement supporting AFGE’s drive, “is providing staff, resources and community support” to its member union.

AFGE currently has 12,000 transportation security officers as members even though it lacks collective bargaining rights for all of them. Over the last decade it has offered employees legal aid, advocated for better working conditions, and sent shop stewards with the TSOs when the workers faced often-arbitrary disciplinary moves from supervisors.

But until a decision last month by Transportation Security Administrator John Pistole, the union lacked even the right to seek to represent the screeners. The TSA administrator during the Bush Administration, which established the agency, banned unions. President George W. Bush and other top administration officials called unionization a threat to national security.

Pistole’s Feb. 4 ruling said that if a union wins recognition among the screeners, it could represent them in limited areas, such as seniority, bids, transfers and awards — but not wages or security issues.

“Collective bargaining rights are a necessity if TSA is going to evolve into a high-performance workplace,” AFGE said.

Bargaining opens at Multnomah County

Contract bargaining began March 2 for 2,800 union workers at Multnomah County. The current contract between the county and American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 88 expires June 30.

On March 1, about 120 members and supporters turned out for a rally outside the County headquarters building, to send the message that members will be standing behind the union bargaining team. Local 88 also has formed a Member Action Team to keep members up-to-date on bargaining.

The current four-year agreement started out with annual cost-of-living increases, but two years ago, with the county facing recession-related budget trouble, Local 88 stepped up to modify the contract, and members took a wage freeze to save their co-workers’ jobs.

“It’s time that county executives acknowledge that sacrifice,” union leaders said at the March 1 rally.



Art Pena of Roofers Local 49 was among the crowd of 750 people rallying in Salem March 7 for middle-wage jobs and collective bargaining rights.

...Labor rallies for jobs

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infrastructure,” Kitzhaber said.

Several lawmakers broke away from their business inside the Capitol to join the rally.

State Rep. Dave Hunt said Oregon House Democrats recently sent a letter of solidarity to Democratic lawmakers in Wisconsin. Reading from the letter, Hunt said: “Attacking public employees under the guise of resolving a fiscal crisis is the cynical kind of politics that Americans have rejected time and again. As Oregon has repeatedly shown, balanced budgets and collective bargaining can coexist.”

Hunt warned, though, that some Republicans in the Oregon House aren’t as supportive of collective bargaining rights.

He said the House Republican leader (referring to Kevin Cameron of Salem) recently was asked if he planned to pursue a ban on collective bargaining rights during this session of the Legislature.

“Now what would be the easy answer to that question?” Hunt asked the crowd.

“NO!” they responded.

“Let me read you what he said: ‘We don’t think *now* is the time to push those buttons,’” Hunt said. “That is not a ‘no,’ that is a ‘we wish we could do it right now, but we’re going to try to do it next year, next month, two years from now.’”

Hunt stressed the importance of standing together to protect the gains the state has made in recent years in areas of transportation, health care, and worker freedoms, “and continue focusing on moving Oregon not left or right — because I know you all have one direction you want to move Oregon, and that is forward.”

Following the rally, a large contingent of union members went inside the Capitol to listen to and testify on a number of important pro-jobs bills, including Senate Memorial 1, a resolution urging Congress to enact and President Obama to sign the Trade Reform, Accountability, Development and Employment (TRADE) Act.

The TRADE Act requires a review of existing trade pacts, including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other major pacts. It spells out what must and must not be included in future trade pacts, and it provides for the renegotiation of existing trade agreements if they don’t meet those standards.

LABOR HUMOR

A CEO, a Tea Party member, and a public employee union member are sitting at a table around a tray with a dozen fresh-baked cookies. The CEO takes 11. Then he turns to the Tea Party activist and says, “Better keep an eye on that union guy. He wants your cookie.”

Local Motion

February 2010

A list of Oregon and Southwest Washington workplaces deciding whether to be union-represented – as reported by the National Labor Relations Board and the Oregon Employment Relations Board.

Voting in union elections

Date	Workplace (Location) Union	Yes	No
2/10	Pioneer Memorial Hospital (Prineville) ONA DECERT	22	5

Requesting a union election

Workplace (Location) Union	Number of workers in unit
Bowtech hunting bow factory (Eugene) Machinists District Lodge W24	94
Dosha Salon Spa (Portland) Communications Workers of America Local 7901	155

LEGEND

: workers will be union-represented : workers will be on their own
DECERT : unionized workers vote whether to go non-union

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