

Inside

MEETING NOTICES

See  
Page 6

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## GOP mounting attacks on unions nationwide

Remember the union picket line slogan, “Take one of us on, take all of us on?” This year, statehouse Republicans across the country are giving new meaning to that: They appear to have resolved to “take all of us on.” Around the country, bills are being pushed to strip collective bargaining rights from public employees, eliminate the prevailing wage and project labor agreements for construction workers, hamper union dues collection, and eliminate wage scales and seniority protections. Most of the Republican governors and majority leaders didn’t campaign on union-busting, but they’re going to extraordinary lengths to seize this moment to weaken and destroy unions.

Here are some state-by-state highlights:

### IDAHO

A bill stripping Idaho teachers of most of their collective bargaining rights was signed into law March 17 by Gov. Butch Otter. The bill limits collective bargaining to compensation (salaries and benefits), limits the length of contracts to one year, and allows school boards to impose their terms if no agreement is reached by mid-June. It eliminates “evergreen” clauses from labor agreements; requires unions to document that they represent over 50 percent of employees before bargaining can begin;

requires labor negotiations to be conducted in public meetings; eliminates continuing contracts and puts all teachers on one- or two- year contracts; eliminates seniority as a factor in layoff decisions; and requires performance evaluations to include feedback from parents and objective measures of growth in student achievement. Opponents of the bill filed initial paperwork with the secretary of state and will decide by mid-April whether to ask voters to overturn the law via referendum.

To get on the 2012 general election ballot, they would have to turn in petitions with signatures of 47,432 Idaho voters no more than 60 days following the end of the legislative session. Meanwhile, other bills heading to passage would set up a teacher merit pay program, and require districts to buy a laptop computer for every high school student, without providing any state money to pay for that.

### MAINE

Republican Gov. Paul LePage last weekend removed a 36-foot mural depicting the state’s labor history from the Department of Labor headquarters. The 11-panel piece in part depicts a 1986 paper mill strike and “Rosie the Riveter” at Bath Iron Works. Artist Judy Taylor won a 2007 competition to create the

mural to depict the “History of Labor in the State of Maine.” Further, the names of conference rooms are being changed to make them more “business friendly.” One of the room names being changed is the “Perkins Room,” named for Frances Perkins, the first female secretary of labor and promoter of New Deal policies that improved workers’ rights on the job. Perkins championed labor reforms after the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist fire that resulted in the deaths of 146 garment workers in New York City. March 25 was the 100th anniversary of that tragedy.

### OHIO

Republican Gov. John Kasich, elected in November with 49 percent of the vote, is pushing legislation to decimate public employee collective bargaining rights. It would end public employees’ right to negotiate pensions and health benefits. Public worker strikes would be banned, and workers would face fines and be docked two days pay for every day they participate in a strike. The bill would do away with binding arbitration as alternative to strikes for police and firefighters. It would let elected officials impose their contract offers when negotiations break down. It would replace salary schedules based on step increases

(Turn to Page 4)

## Buy America policy boosts manufacturing; more needed



United Streetcar production manager Skender (Skip) Nezej (wearing hard hat), explains the production process of the only American-made streetcar to U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood during a press conference March 21 at the Clackamas, Oregon, manufacturing plant. With them to the left are Oregon Congressmen Earl Blumenauer and Peter DeFazio. Also pictured is United Streetcar President Chandra Brown (behind Blumenauer).

Union ironworkers and electricians at United Streetcar were in the media spotlight March 21 as U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood stopped by the Clackamas, Oregon, facility to promote American competitiveness and job growth in the global transit marketplace.

“Out-innovating and out-building the rest of the world provides a clear path toward winning the future,” LaHood said. “And it’s exciting for me to see that vision already coming to life (here).”

About 100 people attended the media event coordinated by Apollo Alliance, a coalition of labor, business, environmental, and community leaders who promote clean energy job creation. Among them were U.S. congressmen Earl Blumenauer, Peter DeFazio, and Kurt Schrader; Portland Mayor Sam Adams; and Oregon AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Barbara Byrd, who is head of Oregon Apollo Alliance.

United Streetcar — a wholly owned subsidiary of Oregon Iron Works, Inc. — is the only manufacturer of modern streetcars in the United States. Cars are built by members of Iron Workers Shopmen’s Local 516 and the Interna-

tional Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 48, and are Buy America compliant, which means at least 70 percent of the components are domestically produced. The U.S. content could soon reach 90 percent thanks to more federal grants.

“United Streetcar is a perfect example of how good public policy can not only create jobs, but also re-create an entire manufacturing sector,” said United Streetcar President Chandra Brown. “Our story tells exactly how the private sector and the federal government can partner to grow the economy together.”

According to Apollo Alliance, America has sent roughly \$10 billion overseas since 2005 to purchase public transit equipment. Apollo Alliance estimates that \$40 billion per year of federal investment in public transit and rail, coupled with the right policies, could create 3.7 million American jobs — 600,000 in the manufacturing sector alone — and begin to meet the currently estimated \$77 billion that is needed just to bring existing systems up to good repair.

(Turn to Page 8)