

## Nearly 85 percent of TSOs vote for union

It's one of the biggest union wins in recent times: 43,000 transportation security officers (TSOs) at 450 airports will be union-represented. Which union they will belong to is still to be decided.

Voting took place March 9 to April 19 by phone and Internet. The way it worked, the workers had three choices: AFL-CIO-affiliated American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE); the independent National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU), or no union.

In order to win, one of the choices had to gain 50 percent plus one vote of all the TSOs voting. No one reached that majority, but 84 percent voted for a union.

AFGE got the most votes, 8,369 (43 percent). NTEU got 8,095 (41 percent). And 3,111 (16 percent) favored "no union."

A runoff election has been tentatively scheduled for May 23 to June 21, and votes will be tallied June 23.

The workers are federal employees and work for the TSA (Transportation Security Administration). TSA was created after airport security was federalized in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

And though they do not have collective bargaining rights, more than 12,000 TSO members are currently in 40 AFGE locals across the country. AFGE Local 1127 is the local for workers in Oregon, and Local 1121 has workers in Washington and Alaska.

"During a time when this country's federal workers and their unions are under attack, it speaks volumes that transportation security officers nationwide stood strong and voted to have a union," said AFGE National President John Gage. "By voting for a voice at work, TSOs have demonstrated that when American workers are given a choice — without intensive intimidation campaigns — they want a union."

## I-5 bridge replacement design gets thumbs up from construction unions

Building trades unions reacted favorably to the April 25 announcement by governors John Kitzhaber of Oregon and Chris Gregoire of Washington that the new Interstate-5 Columbia River Crossing bridge would be built with a deck truss design.

"It's a home run," said John Mohlis, executive secretary of the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council. "We weren't nearly as concerned about the design of the bridge as we were about moving it forward in a timely fashion."

Timing is important as the states are seeking nearly \$1.3 billion in federal funding for the project, which is estimated to cost \$3.6 billion overall.

At a press conference on Hayden Island, the two governors identified the deck truss bridge as the best replacement structure for the aging I-5 bridge because it provides the most certain path to keep the project on schedule and on budget. The other bridge options under consideration would require delays for additional design work and environmental analysis, which would add time and cost to the process, they said.

"We must secure a federal record of decision on our design this year to ensure the best chance of receiving full funding," Gregoire said. "The only way we get federal dollars is by making a decision. We have listened and listened and listened to the public at large. We have listened to experts, as we should. That's why this project is moving forward. One thing I can guarantee you ...

is that some point along the process, somebody has to stand up and make a decision."

Hopes are to secure the funding and break ground on a new bridge in 2013.

The CRC is seeking \$400 million in federal highway discretionary funding as well as \$850 million in Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Starts funding. Additional funding will come from the two states and tolls.

Kitzhaber and Gregoire have asked their respective legislatures and state treasurers to immediately begin working with the departments of transportation to review and refine the financing plan and toll revenue assumptions. The bi-state collaborative approach, they said, will minimize financial risks and provide accountability and oversight as the project moves toward construction.

Mohlis believes the goal is attainable. "I think we're in a really good place at the federal level. We have full support from our Congressional delegation and support from U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood."

LaHood has called the Columbia River Crossing "a forward-thinking multimodal project that will not only serve area residents, but create jobs, spur economic development, and help ensure that the region's economy continues to thrive."

Mohlis said studies show the bridge and surrounding infrastructure work will create or retain 27,000 jobs — 17,000 in the construction industry.

Kitzhaber said the decision "is a

strategic commitment to make transportation investments that reflect the realities of the future, not the past. Moving this project to completion in the most cost effective way possible is critical to providing a safer, less congested transportation system."

## Leave food at mailbox May 14

Letter carriers in the Portland metropolitan area and in Clark County, Wash., will help "Stamp Out Hunger" on Saturday, May 14, part of the annual National Association of Letter Carriers and U.S. Postal Service Food Drive.

Prior to that day, plastic bags will be delivered to every household, along with a postcard reminder. All you have to do is fill the bag with nonperishable food items such as canned meat, fish and soup, cereals, pasta and rice, and leave it at your mailbox on the morning of Saturday, May 14. (Please do not include glass items, homemade items or previously opened containers.)

Letter Carriers will collect the bags and deliver them to drop points, where volunteers will sort the donations and forward them to the Oregon Food Bank. Food collected in Clark County will benefit Clark County hunger-relief agencies. The Food Drive is the largest one-day food collection of the year in Oregon — and across the nation.



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