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Oregon labor leaders to Congress: end the war

A group of 13 Oregon labor leaders sent a tax-day letter to the state's congressional delegation April 18 urging them to take aggressive action towards ending the costly war in Afghanistan.

"Oregonians have already spent more than \$3 billion on the war, and there is no end in sight," the letter said. "President Obama's proposed 2012 budget includes devastating cuts that impact the poor and working class — from low income home heating assistance to community service block grants to Pell grants — while allocating another \$107 billion to continue the war in Afghanistan."

The letter said "It is unconscionable to balance the budget on the backs of working people in order to fund a war that isn't making Americans safer. We urge you to take action to pressure the administration to end the war, including co-sponsoring and voting for legislation to end the war and speaking out forcefully for a new approach."

JwJ to celebrate 20th anniversary

Portland Jobs With Justice is celebrating 20 years of fighting for workers rights with a May 14 fundraising dinner at the Portland Hilton Hotel. Larry Cohen, president of Communications Workers of America, will be the keynote speaker. Twenty years ago, as CWA director of organizing, Cohen was a key figure in forming Jobs With Justice chapters around the country.

The event, entitled "20 Years: A

The letter was signed by Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain; Gary Gillespie, president of Oregon AF-SCME Council 75; Linda Burgin, president, and Heather Conroy, executive director, Service Employees Local 503; Madelyn Elder, president, Communication Workers of America Local 7901; Ken Saether, president, CWA Local 7906; Robert Petroff, president, Oregon Machinists Council; Jonathan Hunt, president-business representative, Amalgamated Transit Union Division 757; Mike Richards, executive secretary-treasurer, Office and Professional Employees Local 11; Gregory A. Pallen, vice president, Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers; Ryan Takas, union rep, International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 5; Margaret Butler, director, Portland Jobs with Justice; Jim Alexander, chair, Southern Oregon Jobs with Justice; and Richard Sanders, executive director, Oregon Education Association.

Generation of Resistance and Visionary Action," will begin with a cocktail hour from 6 to 7 p.m., followed by dinner and presentations, including video highlights of the last 20 years, and recognitions of the group's work.

Tickets are \$60 per person, or \$700 for a table of 10. For details or tickets, call Eliana at 503-236-5573 or visit the group's web site at jwjpg.org.

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Busted!

A sampler of recent charges of employer labor law violations filed with the local office of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

New management fires USW unit leader

United Steelworkers says **Mercury Plastics** broke federal labor law when it fired a union officer at its Vancouver, Washington, factory. Rick Evans, a 14-year machine operator, was unit president and a member of the bargaining team until he was fired without warning in March. USW says that's in retaliation for union activity. The factory prints and cuts plastic films for use in packaging; California-headquartered Mercury bought it last October from **Excelsior Packaging Group**. USW has a separate charge against Excelsior for failure to bargain over the effects of the sale. The most immediate effect was the layoff of over 20 of the facility's roughly 70 workers. The former union contract had no successor clause, but USW says it still represents the 40-plus workers who remain, and Mercury has agreed to meet and bargain a new agreement. If the old contract had been in force, says union rep Gaylan Prescott, Mercury would have had to use progressive discipline and show "just cause." And the union would have had a grievance process to contest the firing. Without a contract, Evans was an "at-will" employee, and management could fire him for "attitude."

More workers fired

Nonunion workers have rights too, under the National Labor Relations Act. And nonunion employers trample them. **Grange Cooperative**, a feed store in Klamath Falls, is accused of firing workers for "protected concerted activity" — Josh Scherf and Leland Ortis — in a complaint filed April 28. And in Beaverton, **Rock Creek Veterinary Hospital** is accused of the same: firing Rabecca Forbes April 1, for comments she made on Facebook.

Repeat offenders

Last month we reported that **MetroWest Ambulance**, a Washington County ambulance contractor, called the police when an employee asked co-workers to sign union cards. Since then, according to new charges filed by **Teamsters Local 223**, a manager ordered three union supporters to take off their union pins. We also reported in March that UK-based multinational **First Student** has had 9 charges filed against it in Oregon alone since January 2010. The company added to its rap sheet with new charges filed April 21 by **Oregon School Employees Association** for a group of 106 school bus drivers at the Gresham-Barlow School District. They voted last June to unionize, and are still without a contract. OSEA says the company is refusing to negotiate economic issues until non-economic issues are resolved, and it's not in a hurry to bargain those either; the law says employers are supposed to bargain in good faith, but OSEA said First Student had no meaningful response to six information requests the union made since March 15.



Machinists District W24 would like to thank all those who sponsored our inaugural Salmon Fishing Derby for Guide Dogs of America. With your help we were able to raise \$11,500!

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