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Portland, Oregon*For Korea, Colombia, and Panama*

## Congress could vote on free trade deals this month

When he was a candidate for president in 2008, Barack Obama led union audiences to believe he was critical of the North American Free Trade Agreement and that he opposed a threesome of NAFTA-style trade agreements that President George W. Bush had negotiated with Korea, Colombia and Panama. Then last year, Obama announced he would ask Congress to ratify the Korea agreement after all. Now it appears he will submit all three treaties to Congress for an up-or-down vote without the possibility of amendment. Depending on the outcome of behind-the-scenes negotiations with House and Senate leaders, the treaties could be voted on this month before Congress leaves town for its August recess.

If so, time is running out for working people to tell members of Congress what they think. The AFL-CIO opposes all three agreements, both in general and for specific reasons. Labor leaders blame NAFTA-style trade policies for America's disastrous de-industrialization and resultant trade deficit, because the treaties make it easier for U.S. corporations to outsource manu-

facturing and services to low-wage countries and to import foreign-made goods.

The trade treaties are based on the model of NAFTA, the trade agreement that has covered the United States, Mexico, and Canada since 1994. NAFTA gives powerful rights to multinational corporations and foreign investors, while doing nothing meaningful to protect workers' rights or the natural environment. Chiefly, NAFTA-style trade treaties expand patent, trademark, and copyright monopolies; give foreign investors the right to challenge domestic regulations via unaccountable trade panels; and cut or eliminate import tariffs. [Import tariffs are taxes on imported goods; they shield domestic industries from direct competition with foreign competitors, and give domestic workers some protection from their own companies' desire to offshore production.]

Of the three, the Korea agreement will have the biggest impact, because South Korea has a large, advanced economy, and a very competitive automotive manufacturing industry. The

Panama agreement is objectionable for other reasons: The country is a hub of offshore finance and shipping, a site of low-wage manufacturing, and a source of drug money laundering and tax evasion.

But it's the Colombia agreement that may be the most offensive to organized labor. Colombia is the most dangerous nation in the world for trade union activists. In the past 25 years, more than 2,850 trade unionists have been murdered — mostly by right-wing paramilitary gunmen working with employers to oppose union activity. Last year, 51 trade unionists were murdered in Colombia, more than in the rest of the world combined.

"We have no doubt that if 51 CEOs had been murdered in Colombia last year, this deal would be on a very slow track indeed," declared AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka in an April 6 press statement.

In a 12-foot by 15-foot office in the historic Board of Trade office building in downtown Portland, Arthur Stamoulis has his

**(Turn to Page 4)**By **DON McINTOSH**  
Associate Editor

For countless unions, the annual summertime picnic is a time-honored tradition. Picnics give members a chance to socialize off the job with co-workers and their families, and bring union members together as a community. They're also a way for members to get better acquainted with their union, even if they're not regular attendees at union membership meetings. And they create memories for kids, putting unions in a positive light for a younger generation.

This year in the Portland area, union picnic season gets under way next weekend, continues throughout the summer, culminates Labor Day with the area's biggest union picnic (the Northwest Oregon Labor Council picnic at Oaks Park), and wraps up the weekend after that for several unions.

Blue Lake Park and Oaks Park are the favored locations for Portland-area union picnics. Blue Lake Park — situated between Marine Drive and Sandy Boulevard off Northeast 223rd Avenue — has swimming, fishing, boating, sports, horseshoes, playgrounds, and a water "spray ground." Oaks Park, occupying 44 acres along the Willamette River just north of the Sellwood Bridge, is a historic amusement park with games and carnival rides, go carts,



the largest roller skating rink on West Coast, and a new 18-hole miniature golf course. Skating is included with all-day ride bracelets, which are usually sold at a discount for union picnickers. There's separate admission for go carts.

Following is a partial list of union picnics that will take place this summer:

**IBEW 48**

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 48 will have the first Portland-area picnic of the season, for members and their families, July 10 at Oaks Park. The picnic draws 1,800 each year. Last year, 60 volunteers made it all happen, says business agent and picnic chairperson Nancy Cary. Amusement park rides are a main attraction: Kids 16 and under get free ride bracelets, and discounted ride bracelets are available for \$7 for those 17 and up. There's also bingo and a raffle, with bikes and other prizes for kids and grownups. And facepainting. And a clown (Local 48 member Jose Sponberg). Food is traditional picnic fare: hamburgers, hot dogs ice cream, chips, and pop. The picnic goes from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**IAM 63**

Machinists Local 63 has been holding a picnic for members and families

at Oaks Park for at least five decades, says District W24 Assistant Directing Business Representative Bob Petroff. Petroff's dad was a Local 63 officer, so his childhood memories loom large with the contests, rides, and all-you-can-drink soda pop. Over the years, some things have changed, Petroff says. The beauty pageant is no more. The penny scramble (in which children root through sawdust to find and keep pennies) is now a nickel scramble, thanks to inflation, and straw has replaced the sawdust. [Note to the younger generation: Any kid finding a poker chip gets a prize.]

But some things are eternal. The union picnic hot dog. The three-legged race. Bingo. Oaks Parks rides.

About 3,000 attend each year. This year's picnic is July 16, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Hamburgers will be served from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.; hot dogs, chili and chips from 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and soda, coffee, and ice cream will be served throughout. A raffle raises money for the Machinists Non-Partisan Political League and the union-sponsored charity Guide Dogs of America. Games start at 11 a.m. for kids and grownups. Amusement park rides are from noon to 2 p.m. and 3 to 5 p.m. Kids 18 and under ride free, and adult

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