

Busted!

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

Blackjack dealer to Chinook casino: "Hit me"

It takes guts to stand up for your rights. While on break in the break room, away from customers, a blackjack dealer at nonunion **Chinook Winds Casino** put on a button: "Union supporter." He was asked by management to remove it, and told it violated policy. Well in that case, he told them, the policy violates the National Labor Relations Act. The dealer, who asked that we not publish his name, filed a charge protesting the policy, as well as restrictions on posting notices, and management's reaction to a Facebook post: Eleven workers were ordered to sign an agreement restricting expression on online social media like Facebook. The NLRB is investigating. A U.S. appeals court ruled recently that workers on Indian reservations have union rights too.

Grange Coop nixes pay cut to settle charges

Just because a union contract expires, that doesn't mean an employer can do whatever it wants. The law says if no new contract is ratified, an employer still has to bargain before it makes changes — as long as a group of workers remains union-represented. That's what the **Grange Cooperative** learned after it cut its part-time workers' wages 59 cents an hour the day after their three-year contract ended Dec. 31. The pay cut went to pay for increases in the cost of health insurance, even though the part-timers don't have that benefit. Grange Coop is a farm and garden store with seven locations and 113 employees in Jackson and Josephine counties. **Teamsters Local 962** filed charges. After the NLRB agreed they'd broken the law, the Grange settled May 24 and paid back pay totaling \$8,406 to 52 workers. (Checks averaged \$161.) Workers voted April 18 to approve a new contract after turning down an earlier offer in March. A separate charge is pending investigation for a worker, Leland Ortis, who says he was fired for engaging in legally protected union activity.

Providence settles employee free speech charge

On Feb. 1, a manager in the Supply and Distribution Department of **Providence St. Vincent Medical Center** reprimanded employee Mary Boal for sharing her phone number and rate of pay with co-workers, and deleted the information from a staff message file. Boal filed charges with the NLRB, and in late April, Providence settled, promising to rescind the policy. "We will not tell you that your rate of pay and other terms and conditions of employment are confidential information that cannot be disclosed to your coworkers," Providence says in a posting to employees that is required as part of the settlement. But now, in a new charge filed June 16, Boal alleges that Providence retaliated against her for filing the earlier charge. The NLRB is trying to get the word out that it's against the law for employers to ban workers from discussing wages and working conditions, whether they have a union or not.



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...Free trade deals move closer to

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hands full. Stamoulis is the executive director of Oregon Fair Trade Campaign, a coalition of unions and human rights groups that since 2004 has worked to oppose NAFTA-style trade agreements, hold elected officials accountable for their votes, and promote a vision of trade that benefits workers and protects the environment. The group is an affiliate of the Citizens Trade Campaign, a national group.

Two years ago, Stamoulis says, the situation looked bright. The three Bush-negotiated agreements were stalled in Congress, with then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi refusing to allow a vote. And there was some momentum behind a bill known as the TRADE Act, which calls for renegotiation of NAFTA. But "fair trade" activists have gone back on the defensive in the last year, Stamoulis said.

It started when Obama announced June 2010 that he wanted the Korea treaty ratified. After House Republicans swept into the majority in November, they upped the ante, pledging not to allow a vote on the Korea deal unless the other two also get a vote. When the White House balked at that, Republican leaders refused to re-authorize a package of benefits known as Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA).

In certain cases where the government certifies that foreign trade has caused job loss, the TAA program pays for workers to get some limited retraining, relocation, COBRA health insurance coverage, and extended unem-

ployment benefits. TAA had been expanded in the February 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in that service workers who lost jobs due to trade also got benefits, not just manufacturing workers.

Initially, the White House demanded that TAA be re-authorized for two years in its expanded form. As this issue went to press, that demand was dropped, and the White House was reportedly prepared to submit all three treaties to Congress in exchange for a one-year reauthorization of regular TAA benefits.

"The White House wants [TAA reauthorization] as cover for Democrats voting for job-killing trade agreements," Stamoulis said, "but the Republicans have been outmaneuvering them at every turn."

If the treaties get a vote in Congress, Stamoulis says, they may be close votes. Accordingly, Oregon Fair Trade Campaign has been "bird-dogging" local members of Congress who favor the treaties or are undecided.

Here's how Oregon representatives stand:

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden hasn't said how he will vote; a spokesperson failed to follow up with the Labor Press about Wyden's positions.

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley opposed the agreements during his 2008 campaign, but since then has been quiet about them; his staff have reportedly said he is "reviewing" the agreements. His spokesperson failed to respond to two messages from the Labor Press.

U.S. Rep. David Wu opposes all

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three agreements on human rights and jobs grounds and issued this statement to the Labor Press: "So long as we neglect to incorporate civil liberties and human rights criteria in our trade agreements, we fail to meet our responsibility to stand up for the rights of workers everywhere to organize, environmental groups to protect natural diversity, and those struggling for self-determination to realize their aspiration."

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden's spokesperson failed to respond to two messages from the Labor Press. Walden has voted consistently in favor of the NAFTA-style trade agreements.

U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer is reportedly in favor of the Korea agree-

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