

...AFL-CIO confab rallies the troops for work ahead

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create jobs repairing pipes and upgrading water treatment facilities.

A delegation from Laborers Local 483 worked to pass a resolution to "promote a position of strength against con-

cessions" which was authored by some Local 483 members who belong to a committee of rank-and-file activists from several unions. The resolution called on the Oregon AFL-CIO to organize a committee to support massive

demonstrations and a sustained campaign to tax banks, corporations, and the wealthy, divert war spending to create a national public works program, and make education, infrastructure and transit investments. After some debate, it was passed in amended form: Instead of forming a committee, the resolution encourages the federation to work with affiliates on the campaign.

Delegates approved a 10-month-long special assessment on affiliated unions totaling \$4 per member which will raise an estimated \$420,000 for use in the 2012 election cycle. They also approved an increase in regular monthly dues, starting 2013, to \$1 per member, up from the current dues of 81 cents per member. And delegates approved several changes to the Oregon AFL-CIO constitution to bring it into line with the national AFL-CIO.

RALLYING THE TROOPS

For local leaders and activists, part of the appeal of attending a labor convention is the chance to get fired up for the work ahead. In this convention, plenary speaker after speaker denounced Wall Streeters for looting the economy.

That provided an unintentional moment of humor at one point. Just after Chamberlain declared that the labor movement isn't afraid of Wall Street bullies, loud alarms went off in the con-

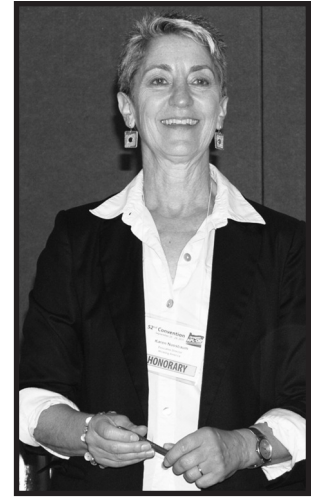
vention hall, and blue lights flashed. Hilton Worldwide is owned by the Blackstone Group, one of the world's largest private equity firms. Had the corporate barons been listening in? As it turned out, it was a scheduled test of the fire alarm system.

Next up, Oregon House Democratic Leader Tina Kotek of Portland observed that the wealthiest people in America tend to complain of "class warfare" whenever proposals arise to tax the rich.

"There's been class warfare for a long time," Kotek told delegates, "and those who've been getting hurt have been the middle class."

From Canada, Jim Sinclair, president of the British Columbia Federation of Labour, brought a message of solidarity for the struggle over Wisconsin public sector union rights.

"We need to reject this division between the private sector and the public sector," Sinclair said. "Why are they attacking public sector workers? Because



Karen Nussbaum of Working America said Oregon has organized 150,000 'community affiliates.'

they don't want to pay their fair share."

Sinclair closed a 20-minute oration with what he learned from a union president at his first union convention — a labor leader who had spent a year and a half in jail because he refused to take down a picket line, saying workers take down picket lines, not courts: "He said to me, 'There's two things you have to learn if you want to help the working class,'" Sinclair recalled. "The working class didn't get a goddamned thing they didn't fight for.... And

you don't get to keep a goddamned thing unless you keep fighting."

Working America executive director Karen Nussbaum reported that her national organization, which the AFL-CIO describes as its "community affiliate," has organized 150,000 members in Oregon. Working America operates a one-to-one door-to-door canvass that results in two out of three households becoming members, Nussbaum said.

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