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Occupy Portland: 10,000 march to protest Wall Street misrule



The Occupy Wall Street protest arrived in Portland Oct. 6, as 10,000 demonstrators marched through the streets of downtown before filling Pioneer Courthouse Square elbow-to-elbow to protest Wall Street dominance of politics and the economy.

By DON McINTOSH
Associate Editor

When workers in 1936 sat down at a GM plant in Flint, Michigan, they didn't know their moment was a turning point. In the same way, it's too soon to tell if Zucotti Park, Manhattan, is a turning point. But the Occupy Wall Street movement which began there is already having an impact. Six weeks ago, debt limit debates and Republican presidential talking points dominated the news. Now, Wall Street corruption, corporate money in politics, and the profound concentration of wealth have been at the top of the news agenda for weeks.

In an Oct. 9-10 poll by Time magazine, 54 percent of Americans had a favorable opinion of the Occupy Wall Street protests, while just 23 percent had an unfavorable opinion, and 23 percent no opinion. [By contrast, 27 percent said they had a favorable opinion toward the Tea Party.] And even larger percentages agreed with the message of the Occupy Wall Street protests. Of the 79 percent of respondents who said they were aware of the protests, 86 percent agreed that Wall Street has too much influence in Washington; 79 percent agreed that the gap between rich and poor has grown too large; 71 percent agree that financial executives are responsible for the 2008 meltdown and should be

prosecuted; and 68 percent said the rich should pay more taxes.

For organized labor — which has always focused on economic justice — it's a moment of vindication, and of excitement over the movement's potential.

Around the country, unionists at every level of the labor movement are coming out to support the Occupy demonstrations and encampments. Though protesters express it in different ways, their message is clear: Wall Street is making life worse for the 99 percent of Americans who aren't part of the economic elite. Many unionists have been making that point since the 2008 financial crash and been largely ignored, but larger numbers, and the ongoing nature of the "occupation," are making Occupy Wall Street impossible to ignore.

Occupy Wall Street started with a July 13 call by the magazine Adbusters for 20,000 people to "flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street for a few months." A group of activists in New York City took up the call, and the protest began on Sept. 17 with 1,000 people marching to protest Wall Street dominance of politics and the economy. As many

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Family health insurance coverage tops \$15,000 a year

Unionized firms are more likely to provide health benefits

If you think health insurance premiums are still out of control, you'd be right. Employer-sponsored family health coverage is now \$15,073 a year on average — according to the latest annual survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Health Research & Educational Trust. That's more than a full-time worker at the federal minimum wage makes in a year. It's also a 9 percent increase over 2010 — nearly triple the rate of general inflation (3.2 percent), and quadruple the increase in workers' wages (2.1 percent.)

Meanwhile, employee-only health coverage is now \$5,429 a year on average, an 8 percent increase over 2010.

The survey found that about 60 percent of the employers offer health benefits to their workers.

On average, covered workers contribute 18 percent of the premium for

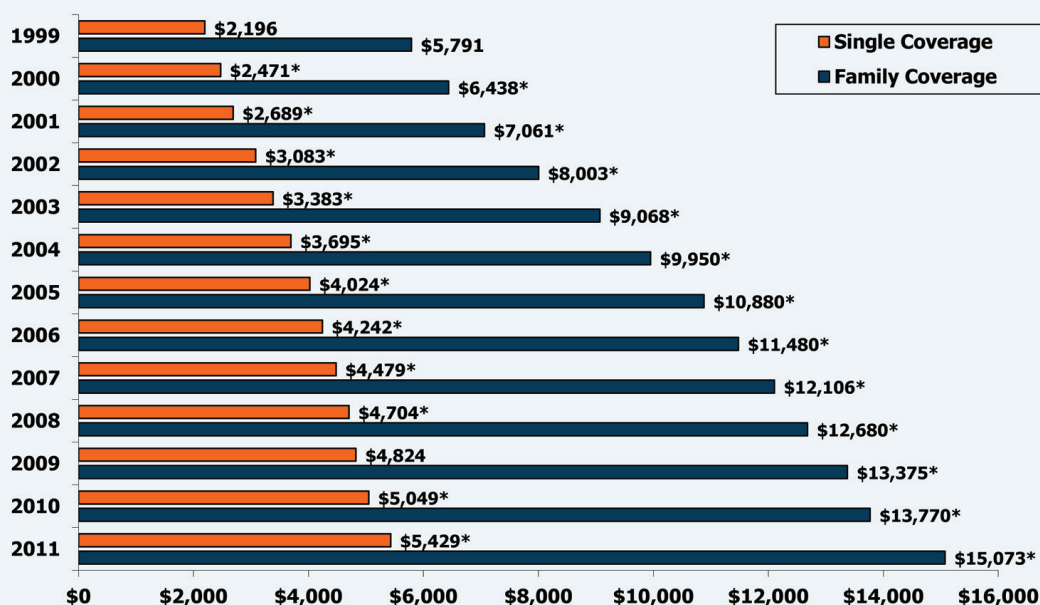
employee-only coverage, and 28 percent of the premium for family coverage, about the same as in 2010. That means covered workers pay \$921 (\$77 a month) on average toward single coverage and \$4,129 (\$344 a month) for family coverage.

Premiums for employer-sponsored family health insurance have risen 113 percent since 2001, while workers wages have risen just 34 percent and the overall cost-of-living has risen 27 percent. Workers' premium contributions are increasing too. Of the \$15,073 total annual cost of employer-provided family health coverage, workers contributed \$4,129 on average, and employers contributed \$10,944.

Under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act — the package of federal health insurance reforms passed in 2010 — young adults up to age 26 who don't have employer coverage on their own are eligible to be covered as dependents on their parents' plan. An estimated 2.3 million adult children have been added to policies since that provision took effect. That may account for part of the 9 percent

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Average Annual Premiums for Single and Family Coverage, 1999-2011



* Estimate is statistically different from estimate for the previous year shown (p<.05).
Source: Kaiser/HRET Survey of Employer-Sponsored Health Benefits, 1999-2011.