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Unions in Marion, Polk, and Yamhill counties throw holiday party for local kids

Musician Norman Sylvester (below) sings a Christmas song for Santa and Mrs. Claus during a holiday party Dec. 3 sponsored by the Marion-Polk-Yamhill Counties Central Labor Council. An estimated 400 kids and parents sang holiday songs, watched a movie, and met Santa at The Elsinore Theatre in Salem. Afterward, everyone received a goody bag. The labor council funds the annual event — now in its 71st year — through donations from more than 14 union affiliates and unionized businesses in the community. Santa is played by Jack Rusen of Albany Steelworkers Local 6163. Mrs. Claus is played by Mrs. Jack Rusen. Sylvester and his band are members of Musicians Local 99.



Machinists approve four-year contract extension with Boeing

The deal ends the highest-profile labor law case in decades

In Wichita, Portland, and the Puget Sound, Machinists at Boeing Co. voted by a 74 percent margin Dec. 7 to approve a four-year extension to their existing union contract. The agreement raises wages and it preserves and increases retiree benefits for 35,000 union members in three states. It also commits to locate some new assembly work at existing union facilities.

The deal was reached after months of high-drama political interference by Congressional Republicans in a federal court case over Boeing's violation of U.S. labor law. International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) filed charges March 26, 2011, alleging that Boeing decided to locate its second 787 Dreamliner assembly line in South Carolina, a right-to-work state, in order to retaliate against its union-represented workers for striking. Under U.S. labor law, workers have the right to strike, and employers may not retaliate against workers for exercising that right.

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) investigated, and on April 20, Regional Director Rich Ahearn issued a formal complaint against Boeing. Normally, it can be hard to show that retaliation was an employer's motive for shifting production, but in this case, Boeing's top executives had said repeatedly that they were locating in South Carolina because of past strikes. In the complaint, the NLRB asked the court to order that Boeing locate its second 787 assembly line in the state of Washington. It's not clear that the judge would have agreed. The two sides were last in court Oct. 20, before administrative law judge Clifford Anderson. But Boeing management may have been concerned about other ramifications of the trial.

Bob Petroff, assistant directing business representative of Gladstone, Oregon-headquartered IAM District

W24, was one of the five union officials who took part in the secret talks over the contract extension. Petroff thinks the NLRB case was a big factor that led Boeing to seek a deal with the union.

"I think they were very fearful of having their CEO testify as to what their intent was," Petroff told the Labor Press, "because it was not a financially prudent decision. It was based on retaliation."

Machinists have struck the company four times over the past 20 years. The most recent was an eight-week walkout in 2008, which resulted in the four-year agreement they are currently working under. That pact wasn't set to expire until September 2012.

After the NLRB opened proceedings on the allegations against Boeing, Republicans in Congress targeted the NLRB — threatening its budget, compelling the NLRB's top prosecutor to testify at a Congressional hearing, even trying to use Congressional subpoena power to get the NLRB to reveal its legal strategy in the Boeing case to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

As part of the accord with Boeing, the union asked the NLRB to drop the case, which it did two days after the ratification vote.

Seattle-headquartered IAM District Lodge 751 called the accord "a historic moment" in changing the relationship between the union and Boeing, because for the first time, company executives are committing to keep work in the Puget Sound. Boeing vows in the contract to build a new airplane model — the 737 MAX — at its existing unionized facilities in the Puget Sound.

- Other terms:
- Annual 2 percent across-the-board wage increases each September, plus quarterly cost-of-living increases equal to the increase in the Consumer Price Index [IAM says Boeing members currently average \$59,000 a year];
 - An incentive program — with details to be worked out by a union-management committee — under which

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