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Capitol rally: 'Save Public Service'

How should the Oregon Legislature cover a \$340 million revenue shortfall? Not with layoffs and service cuts, said more than 1,000 public employees and their allies at a Presidents Day rally Feb. 20 on the front steps of the state capitol in Salem. The "Day of Action for a Strong Oregon" was coordinated by the Oregon Education Association, but included members from AFSCME, Service Employees, the Oregon School Employees Association, the American Federation of Teachers, parent-teacher organizations, and other groups. National AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler, who hails from Portland, also attended. Rallygoers called on lawmakers to protect funding for education and social services and to maintain prisons, and thus protect middle-class jobs. In the photo above, Linda Peterson of AFSCME Local 3214 (Albertina Kerr/Eugene), Berely Mack of Local 1246 (State Operated Community Program, a service that provides 24-hour care and supervision to people with developmental disabilities and are a risk to others), and Mack's cousin, Elicia David, were among the throng of people at the rally. The Legislature had not adjourned as this issue went to press, but it appeared that further cuts to K-12 education and in-home care to seniors and people with disabilities were spared, and no prisons will close. (Photo by Don Loving.)

National comics, AFL-CIO wrap up three days of events for Work Connects Us All campaign

Activities included free comedy show and 'thank-a-worker' events during Portland Jazz Fest

Portland working families, national comics from Laughing Liberally, and the Oregon AFL-CIO wrapped three days of events, workshops, and actions Feb. 19-21 as part of the AFL-CIO's new Work Connects Us All campaign. The effort is part of a broader push by the AFL-CIO to recognize the ways in which work connects everyone, and the value of each person's contribution through work.

The collaboration between Laughing Liberally and the AFL-CIO had several components, including a comedy show as well as comedy trainings for activists and a campaign at the Portland Jazz Fest to "thank" workers for their help in making the festival a success.

The events kicked off on Sunday, Feb. 19 with "Laughter Works," a free show at Helium Comedy Club that featured a line-up of nationally-renowned comedians, including Lee Camp (who has appeared on Showtime and is a contributor to The Onion), Negin Farsad (who has appeared on Comedy Central



Comedian Negin Farsad had a packed house in Portland in stitches Feb. 19 at a free comedy show hosted by the Oregon AFL-CIO. The event is part of the "Work Connects Us All" campaign launched last month. (Photo by Russell Sanders.)

and MTV), and Katie Halper (who has appeared on MSNBC and Huffington Post), as well as local Portland comedi-

ans.

A crowd of 350 attended the show, which focused not only on politics but work and how work is the tie that binds all Americans together.

Activities continued into the week with workshops run by Camp, Farsad and Halper for local organizers on using humor in their work to reach new audiences and best practices on Twitter to assist with organizing campaigns.

On Feb. 20 and 21, the comedians, along with Working America canvassers, distributed "thank you" cards to stagehands, ticket-takers, and other workers involved in the Portland Jazz Festival. Participants distributed hundreds of cards throughout the two days to highlight the behind-the-scenes work that is often not recognized but is vital to the festival's success.

The events come on the heels of the launch of the Work Connects Us All campaign, with television ad buys in Portland, Pittsburgh, and Austin, Tex., as well as an online component with an interactive website at www.WorkConnectsUsAll.org, and outreach in communities to spark innovative initiatives and new community partnerships.

Milwaukie light rail line creates jobs

"I love seeing those cranes on the skyline," smiled John Mohlis, executive secretary of the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council. Mohlis was speaking at a press conference Feb. 23 to recognize the Portland-Milwaukie light rail transit project for paving the way for much-needed construction jobs in the metro area.

TriMet began work last April on the \$1.5 billion project, which includes a cable-stay bridge over the Willamette River. Estimates forecast the project will create up to 14,500 jobs by the time it is completed in September 2015. This estimate includes 7,122 jobs working directly on the project, such as construction workers, planners, designers, and engineers. It also includes up to 7,370 indirect or induced jobs, such as positions at suppliers of materials (steel, concrete, wood, and more.) Induced jobs are jobs created by the spending of

wages for items such as groceries, gas, restaurants, and entertainment.

"Thank you for helping to build a better future. We've been woefully underemployed in our region," said Jodi Guetzloe Parker, executive secretary of the Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council. "Being able to take care of ourselves is a huge matter of pride for us," she said. "We're blue collar. We're proud of who we are. We're proud of what we do, and we want to keep helping Portland grow and expand."

Also speaking at the press conference organized by TriMet were project contractors, workers, Portland Mayor Sam Adams, and Congressmen Earl Blumenauer and Kurt Schrader.

"I'm asked all the time, what can government do to get the jobs going, get the economy going," said Schrader, who represents Clackamas and portions of Multnomah counties. "I truly believe

the President (Obama) is right on the money when he talks about infrastructure investment. That's jobs just not now, but into the future for our kids and grandkids. This type of investment is huge. The multiplier effect in the community is huge, at a time when we're struggling."

Blumenauer called the Milwaukie line the next great portion of our light rail system. "What I like is, we've had the vision as a community, the leadership and the skills in the construction industry, to keep going," he said. "We've never really stopped since 1982."

Jaci Lyn Hayden, a University of Portland civil engineering grad working on the project, said when the line opens in 2015, "It's going to start an entire other phase of economic development. By Portland making an investment in light rail, we're making an investment in our future."



Jodi Guetzloe Parker, executive secretary of the Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council, speaks at a "Jobs for Oregon" press conference Feb. 23 to recognize the Portland-Milwaukie light rail transit project and the jobs it is creating. Standing behind her at the east end of the light-rail bridge construction project near OMSI are Portland Mayor Sam Adams and Maurice Rahming, owner of union contractor O'Neil Electric. Several politicians, contractors, workers, and union officials attended the event.