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## Unions picket grain terminal at Port of Vancouver

Construction unions held an informational picket March 15 at the Port of Vancouver, where out-of-state, nonunion Younglove Construction is employing foreign and out-of-state workers to build an export terminal expansion for United Grain. The Port is leasing the public land to United Grain under very favorable terms for the company. United Grain also is receiving warehouse and grain elevator tax exemptions from the state. Given all the incentives, three Southwest Washington legislators raised concerns about the use of foreign workers on the project at time when unemployment in the construction industry hovers at 30 percent. A Portland television station reported that of 240 workers brought in to pour concrete at the grain terminal, 60 percent were from another country. Younglove has a history of recruiting workers from Mexico. Last month, leaders of the Southwest Washington Central Labor Council and State Rep. Jim Moeller met with staff of U.S. Senators Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray seeking assistance to determine if any guest worker visa programs are being abused, or if port security standards initiated after 9/11 are being violated. "During these times of economic insecurity and record unemployment, it is imperative that we secure work for our local businesses and workforce," the labor council said in a letter. "We must also redouble our efforts to protect workers' rights — foreign or domestic." Future projects are proposed at Port of Vancouver, Port of Kalama, and Port of Longview.

## UO faculty file cards to unionize

By STEFAN OSTRACH  
Special Correspondent

EUGENE — A majority of the 1,912 faculty at the University of Oregon (UO) have signed cards requesting union representation by United Academics of the University of Oregon (UA-UO). The union will be affiliated with both the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

"I never thought it would happen," said history professor Daniel Pope, who has been involved in efforts to unionize the faculty in Eugene since the 1970s.

Pope said several factors led to the successful outcome, especially the growing concern among faculty about the "corporatization" of the university.

Workers in manufacturing, transportation, and service industries are all too familiar with the speed-up and growing trend of employers to use contingent workers, temps and/or part-timers who have no job security or benefits. These same trends are eroding working conditions at universities and prompting faculty to organize.

Also, the summary firing of UO President Richard Lariviere by the State Board of Education and Gov. John Kitzhaber earlier this year "showed the powerlessness" of the faculty, Pope said.

UA-UO is seeking certification under Oregon public sector labor law's

card-check provision. It is the largest group to organize under card-check since the law was enacted in 2007. If the Employment Relations Board (ERB) finds that the signed cards represent a majority of the UO faculty, the union will be certified and the university administration will be required to start negotiating a first contract.

However, the collective bargaining process could be delayed if 30 percent of proposed bargaining unit members sign a petition specifically requesting a secret ballot vote. If they do so, the ERB would set a date for an election.

The university administration also could delay or even derail bargaining by filing an objection to the definition of the bargaining unit. Some observers expect the administration will, but at press time no objections had been filed. [The deadline for doing so was April 4, after this issue went to press.]

It is unusual — but not unprecedented — to include all faculty in one bargaining unit. If certified, the unit will be composed of tenured, tenure-track, non-tenure track, adjunct, emeritus, library, research, and post-doctoral scholars. Only faculty at the law school would be excluded.

Tenured and tenure-track faculty have much more job security, so they are often thought not to share a community of interest with part-time and temporary teachers. Although UA-UO says it has majority support among each of the faculty groups, its activists much prefer a broader effort including all of the faculty.

Tina Boscha, who has been teaching English composition since 2003 on short-term contracts with no job security, says all faculty share the same interests. "We all perform the mission of the university — teaching, research, and service," she said. This effort is "not just for non-tenure track — it's across the board."

Tenure-track professor Jane Cramer said she was inspired to join the union campaign after seeing alarming trends starting under former UO President Dave Frohnmayer to "corporatize" the university.

"There has been a dramatic increase

## Public confusion and partisan divide as 'Obamacare' turns two

By DON MCINTOSH  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) — better known as "Obamacare," the name its opponents gave it — turned two on March 23. Three days later, the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments on whether it should be struck down.

PPACA is an extraordinarily complex health insurance reform law, and the public has been divided over it ever since President Barack Obama signed it two years ago — according to monthly tracking polls by the Kaiser Family Foundation, a non-partisan health care information clearinghouse. In the group's March 2012 poll, 41 percent of Americans had a favorable

view of the PPACA, while 40 percent had an unfavorable view.

Two findings stand out in the foundation's two years of polling — partisan polarization, and lack of public knowledge about the law.

PPACA passed without the vote of a single House or Senate Republican, and two years later, the poll shows three-fourths of self-identified Republicans have an unfavorable view of the law, while two-thirds of Democrats view it favorably. Meanwhile, of the 40 percent who said they have an unfavorable opinion about PPACA, a majority said it was more about their general feelings about the direction of the country and what's going on in Washington, D.C., right now than

said it was based on what they know about the law.

In fact, the public doesn't know much about the law, the poll has found. Six in 10 say they don't have enough information about the law to understand how it will impact them personally. That's the same proportion that said so in April 2010, immediately after the law's passage.

The poll also shows that some of the most popular provisions of the law are among the least widely known, whereas the law's best-known feature — the individual mandate — is its most unpopular part. Only one in three Americans supports the mandate, PPACA's requirement that starting in 2014 all other-

(Turn to Page 11)

(Turn to Page 4)