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Welcome, Postmaster General Donahoe

More than 50 protesters picketed outside the Vancouver Hilton and Convention Center Aug. 21, where Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe was speaking to business representatives from the Greater Portland Postal Customer Council's annual Mailer's Conference and Expo. Protesters handed out a "WANTED" poster for Donahoe, whom they allege is violating federal law by willfully destroying mail service. Donahoe is in the process of cutting half of the Postal Service's mail processing plants, including four in Oregon, and eliminating Saturday mail delivery. National Association of Letter Carriers union officials Kevin Card and Jim Cook signed up with retired Rev. John Schwiebert to attend the mailers conference. Schwiebert handed out fliers inside. Afterward, Card reported that Donahoe talked about the "crisis in confidence" surrounding USPS. "I don't think anyone has created more of a crisis than Patrick Donahoe himself, going out in front of the American people and telling them that we're broke and that we're about to go out of business — and nothing could be further from the truth," Card said. Union officials say the post office isn't broke, it's not going out of business, and it's not asking for a bailout." Card said Congress created much of the problem when it passed a law in 2006 requiring USPS to pre-pay its retiree health benefits for 75 years in the future — at a cost of \$5.5 billion a year. "Basically, all Americans are being held hostage by a Congress that does not want to admit that they are taxing the USPS to death, and they're destroying an American institution that's been around since before we had the Declaration of Independence. That's the real crime here," Card said. The protest was organized by Portland Community and Postal Workers United, a coalition of groups committed to save USPS.

CWA effort for contract at Doshia comes to an end

A five-store local chain of Aveda-branded salons is nonunion once again

Communications Workers of America (CWA) Local 7901 called it quits at Doshia Salon Spa on Aug. 16 — a week before a scheduled decertification election was to have taken place. Local 7901 President Madelyn Elder said the decision to "disclaim interest" was a painful one, and came after a discussion with a committee of pro-union workers. Sentiment among Doshia

workers was running two-to-one against continued union representation, Elder said. Hair stylists, massage therapists, estheticians and other workers at the five-location Aveda-branded chain had voted 79 to 66 to unionize on March 30, 2011. But Doshia's owners never agreed to a union contract.

Doshia hired former Oregon Republican Party chair Bob Tiernan to oversee contract talks. The negotiations went nowhere, Elder said: The union made all sorts of proposals, to which the employer's response was "no" — even to a proposal for direct deposit of

paychecks.

When there is no union contract a year after workers vote to unionize, the National Labor Relations Act allows a decertification vote.

"Employers know they can wear us down, and at the end of the year, get workers to sign an anti-union petition," Elder said. "All they have to do is say, 'Well, what did they accomplish for you?' They say, 'What's in your contract? Oh, you don't have a contract. Then why do you have a union?'"

Meanwhile, turnover took its toll, of employees and of union supporters.

Avakian, Starr spar at building trades gathering

BEND — Oregon Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian said he will work with labor to close a loophole in state statutes that allow universities and public schools to avoid paying prevailing wages on construction projects.

"This is a sham," Avakian told delegates at the 51st convention of the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council (OSBCTC). Avakian was responding to question about the Oregon University System skirting prevailing wage laws during a candidates' forum Aug. 16. Avakian, a Democrat, is being challenged in November by Republican state Sen. Bruce Starr. OSBCTC endorsed Avakian in the non-partisan race.

"We've got projects in the state right now that are being done by public entities, but what they're doing is taking their land, they're taking the project, they're giving it to a booster club or some other private group that does all the construction and all the funding to it — with this handshake that at the end, it's all going to be gifted back to the public body for use," Avakian said.

Avakian said this scenario played out on the \$200 million basketball arena project at the University of Oregon, and it's happening at some local high schools, whereby the school donates its football field to the booster



BRAD AVAKIAN



BRUCE STARR

club, which in turn pays for re-turfing without being subject to prevailing wage laws. After the project is done, the field is gifted back to the school.

"It's a loophole in the law that has absolutely got to be closed," Avakian said. "You better believe that I will be right up there with your leadership and leading the way to get that loophole closed and make sure that workers who work on these truly public projects get the money they deserve."

Starr wasn't quite as emphatic with his answer. "As far as I'm concerned, universities that use public tax dollars should be paying prevailing wage on any construction project."

A legislator since 1999, Starr said bills on this issue have been introduced in the past but have gone nowhere. "The politics on this are interesting to say the least," he said. "Legislation has been introduced; we've seen where those bills have gone ... You look at who runs the Oregon Senate, and that has a lot to do (with) where legislation like this goes."

In response to a question about using the labor commissioner bully pulpit to advocate for a fair permitting process for proposed coal and liquefied natural gas (LNG) export terminals, Starr replied: "There's no equivocation on this from my perspective, it's absolutely yes ... I will be championing projects like this in the Legislature ... I will advocate for it. I will lead on it. We have to get it done."

Avakian wasn't quite as emphatic.

"My opponent and I both know that there are no real plans in Oregon right now that are going to end up with an LNG facility or a coal facility being built in the near future. Politically speaking, it just is not going to happen right now. Whoever tells you different than that, whether it's politics or not, is not giving you the straight scoop."

Avakian said he supports memoranda being signed by building trades councils assuring that terminals are built under union project labor agree-

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