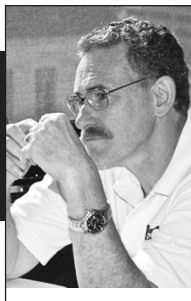


## Who's On Our Side?

By Tom Chamberlain



Lame duck, like the Senate filibuster, has moved from an alien term to the center of political conversations. A lame duck session is the time between an election and when new members of Congress, state, or local governments, are sworn into office. A lame duck session, though short in duration, is time when outgoing electeds who chose not to run or were defeated are freed from the accountability of constituents.

A lame duck session is what allowed the Michigan Legislature to pass so-called "right-to-work" legislation. Such legislation allows workers who are represented by a union not to pay union dues. Think about it, workers get all the benefits of union representation — wages, fringe benefits, political power, and a voice in the work place. In fact, if these workers get in trouble at work the union is required to represent them. But they can choose to not pay dues.

Imagine if Oregonians could elect not to pay taxes, but were still allowed to send their children to public schools, drive on Oregon roads, use the library, and receive unemployment insurance, workers' compensation benefits, and a host of other services. As more and more Oregonians elected not to pay their taxes, services would erode to the point of collapse. That is exactly the corporate strategy of right

to work: to bankrupt America's unions.

Twenty-four states have passed right-to-work laws. In 1957, Indiana passed such a law, and eight years later repealed it. This year we saw right-to-work once again pass in Indiana.

The negative impact of a right-to-work (RTW) law on workers is well documented:

- Wages in RTW states are 3.2 percent lower. Using the average wage in non-RTW states as the base (\$22.11), the average full-time, full-year worker in a RTW state makes about \$1,500 less annually than a similar worker in a non-RTW state.

- The rate of employer-funded health insurance is 2.6 percent lower in RTW states compared with non-RTW states. If workers in non-RTW states were to receive health insurance at work at this lower rate, 2 million workers nationally would not have health insurance.

- The rate of employer-sponsored pensions is 4.8 percent lower in RTW states when you compare similar workplaces. If workers in non-RTW states were to receive pensions at this lower rate, 3.8 million fewer workers nationally would have pensions.

De-funding unions removes the major power base in state after right-to-work state that could stand up for workers and progressive interests. Af-

ter a right-to-work law is implemented, right-wing conservatives and corporate CEOs have free rein to implement a corporate agenda at the expense of the middle class and poor. That's why we see profit-motivated experiments like private-for-profit prisons in right-to-work states such as Texas and Arizona.

We're no longer just seeing this in traditionally conservative states. In Michigan, 26 percent of workers belong to a union (compared to 17.3 percent in Oregon). It is one of the most unionized states in the country. If Michigan can become a right-to-work state, every state is in jeopardy. Our nation is in jeopardy.

As a movement, unions and union members must forget about old wrongs and grudges that separate us. Competition for members that pit one union against another burn up resources, and more often than not, deny a confused workforce any union representation at all. As a movement, we need to understand that until private and public unions, AFL-CIO and independent unions, come together as one force, one voice, we will continue to be engaged in a defensive battle that results in more Michigans.

*Tom Chamberlain is president of the Oregon AFL-CIO.*

***"Happy Holidays to Oregon's working families and all of the dedicated people who worked so hard to make 2012 a winning year for organized labor!"***

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Brad  
**Avakian**  
State Labor Commissioner

## Get involved in Clackamas water district recall effort

To The Editor:

As was reported in the Dec. 7, 2012, edition of the Labor Press, front line employees of the Clackamas River Water District (members of AFSCME Local 350) and the Northwest Oregon Labor Council are supporting the recall of water district commissioners Patricia Holloway and Grafton Sterling. These two commissioners have filed numerous frivolous lawsuits and complaints leading to a loss of insurance for CRW and they are being investigated by the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries for harassment to a CRW employee and creating a hostile work environment, among other things.

We had a very successful canvas day

## Open Forum

Dec. 1, with about 27 union people showing up to go door-to-door collecting signatures for the recall petitions.

We are planning another union canvas day on Saturday, Jan. 5, the location to be decided. If you would like to be involved in the recall campaign, please e-mail to: [crwfacts@gmail.com](mailto:crwfacts@gmail.com) or call me at 503-313-2698.

**Naomi Angier**  
Chief petitioner  
AFSCME Local 88  
Milwaukie, Oregon

## LERA's 'Maggie Awards' go to Kaer of OFN #5017, Tedesco

Dannica Kaer of the Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals Local 5017 employed at Kaiser Permanente and labor attorney Michael Tedesco were the labor recipients of this year's "Maggie Awards," presented by the Oregon chapter of the Labor and Employment Relations Association (LERA).

LERA is an organization that brings labor-management relations practitioners together to improve relations. The annual awards recognize people who have demonstrated commitment to the collective bargaining process with integrity and involvement in the labor relations community.

Kathleen Fuller-Poe, human resources manager at the Multnomah County Health Department, received the management practitioner award; Henry Drummonds, Lewis and Clark Law School, took home the award for neutrals; and Eva Corbin, retired deputy administrator of labor relations for the

Oregon Department of Administrative Services, received the Emerita Award.

The awards were presented following LERA's annual conference held last month in Portland. The awards are in memory of Magdalena "Maggie" Jacobsen, who founded the Oregon chapter of LERA while assigned to Portland as a mediator for the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.



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