

Oregon AFL-CIO E-Board endorses immigration reform

At a March 5 meeting, the Oregon AFL-CIO Executive Board gave unanimous approval to a resolution in favor of "common sense immigration reform," at the request of the national AFL-CIO. The state labor federation is made up of affiliated unions with a combined membership of 104,000, not counting the Working America community affiliate for workers who don't have a union in their workplace.

The immigration resolution reflects principles articulated by the national AFL-CIO and Change to Win federation unions. Those principles include a path to citizenship; an independent commission to assess labor market shortages; an effective work authorization mechanism to hold employers accountable; improvement, not expansion, of temporary work programs; and rational operational control of the border.

In a recent poll commissioned by the national AFL-CIO, 62 percent of union members said they favored a comprehensive immigration reform approach that emphasizes workers rights and includes a roadmap to citizenship for immigrants currently living and working in the United States. Another 23 percent said they were opposed and 16 percent not sure. Support was highest in manufacturing unions (67 percent) and lowest in building trades unions (51 percent). Respondents were read a description of this proposal, and asked if they agree:

"The federal government would establish a roadmap to citizenship for immigrants currently living and working in the U.S. Employers who continue to violate the law and hire unauthorized workers would be punished and face strict fines and penalties. In the future, employers would be able to bring in foreign workers only when the economy is strong enough so that there are real shortages of workers, and those workers would have the same rights as all other workers."



DAVID NEEL

Eight Portland families struggle, in HBO documentary American Winter

In the richest country on earth, millions of families have been left out in the cold

Finally, a film about the human consequences of the Great Recession: On March 18, HBO will air American Winter, an intimate documentary filmed in Portland during the winter of 2011-12. Produced and directed by Emmy award-winning filmmakers Joe and Harry Gantz, it's about how the economy plays out in the lives of eight Portland-area families.

Years into the downturn, formerly middle class families are finding themselves in financial crisis and needing as-

sistance for the first time in their lives. Meanwhile, the social safety net that was created to help people in difficult times has been weakened by budget cuts.

The film's point is urgent enough that the Oregon AFL-CIO is making a copy available for showings at local union meetings. In Washington, D.C., U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) spoke at a March 6 screening. Local unionists are among those captured on film, which also includes interviews with Portland City Commissioner Nick Fish.

The film airs on HBO March 18 at 9 p.m., and can be seen on HBO On Demand.

NLRB says PIRG fundraiser broke federal labor law

Union supporter was fired illegally

Since two dozen Portland call center workers unionized 16 months ago, their employer, the Fund for the Public Interest, has fired at least nine union supporters. Communications Workers of America Local 7901 protested most of the firings to the National Labor Relations Board, charging illegal retaliation. Up to now, the federal agency has dismissed the charges: Investigators didn't find enough evidence that suppressing worker rights was a motive, in a high-turnover workplace where firings are routine.

But on Feb. 27, the NLRB issued a formal complaint against the Fund, which is the fundraising arm for the U.S. PIRG network and its spinoff environmental groups. In the complaint, the NLRB says the Fund broke federal labor law when it fired David Neel.

Neel, a 35-year-old single father of two teenage boys, had done well as a fundraiser in 18 months at the call center. But on more than one occasion, he defended the union in arguments with call center director Referd Raley. On Nov. 2, talking with co-workers, Neel criticized Raley's behavior toward employees. Word got back to Raley, and on Nov. 6, Raley accused Neel of having submitted false numbers in a phone

report, and fired him over the phone while Neel was driving to work.

Neel denied that, and says he was fired illegally. The NLRB agreed, saying Neel was fired because he "engaged in concerted activities with other employees for the purposes of mutual aid and protection," and/or "because he engaged in Union activities."

Before issuing the formal complaint, the agency tried to get the two sides to reach a voluntary settlement. The Fund was willing to settle the charge and compensate Neel with back pay, but balked at his insistence on being reinstated to his job.

A federal administrative law judge is scheduled to hear the case June 25.

Save Our Postal Service rally in Portland March 17

A Save Our Postal Service national day of action will take place on St. Patrick's Day, Sunday, March 17 — the anniversary of the great postal strike of 1970.

In Portland, supporters will gather at Pioneer Square starting at 2 p.m. For more information, go to www.savethepostoffice.com.

Washington CLUB golf June 12-13

Mark your calendars for June 12-13 to participate in the 13th annual Washington CLUB Charity Golf Classic at Gold Mountain Golf Complex in Bremerton, Wash. This year, the fundraiser for Holly Ridge Center, The Children's Hospital-Seattle, and the Diabetes Research Institute expects to break \$1 million in donations.

CLUB stands for Contractors, Legislators, Unions and Business.

For more information or to register, go to www.wa-club.org.



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