

Obama nominates five to NLRB; U.S. House goes after agency

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI)— President Barack Obama rounded out his slate of nominees to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) by nominating management lawyers Phillip Miscimarra of Chicago and Harry Johnson III of Los Angeles to two seats on the five-member panel. He also renominated board chairman Mark Gaston Pearce for a new term.

Earlier this year, Obama nominated current recess appointees Sharon Block and Richard Griffin to full terms.

Block, Griffin and Pearce are Democrats. Miscimarra and Johnson are

Republicans, both of whom challenged recent actions by the NLRB. Miscimarra criticized the board's acting general counsel, Lafe Solomon, for issuing a complaint against Boeing in an unfair labor practice case tied to building a factory in South Carolina.

The two "have views on labor relations we do not agree with," said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. "But working people need and deserve a functioning NLRB, and confirmation of a full package will provide that stability."

Many Republicans, backed by big business and the U.S. Chamber of

Commerce, have been trying for years to dismantle the agency. The NLRB enforces workers' rights on the job and oversees labor-management relations.

To this point, Senate Republicans have blocked all of Obama's nominees via the filibuster. This has forced the president to make recess appointments to keep the board functioning.

NLRB foes challenged Obama's most recent recess appointments, claiming Congress was not technically in recess at the time they were made. In January, a federal appeals court agreed, ruling the recess appointees illegal. All

three judges were appointed by a Republican president.

The NLRB has appealed the ruling to the Supreme Court.

Republicans are now coming after the agency with legislation. The House Republican leadership rammed through a bill (HR 1120) April 12 that would invalidate every ruling made

since the recess appointments (560), and ban the board from deciding anything until it has a three-member quorum. The vote was 219-209, with 10 Republicans joining all Democrats in voting against it. [Oregon U.S. Rep. Greg Walden voted for the bill.]

The bill is not expected to be taken up by the Senate.

NLRB upholds labor charges against Boeing

SEATTLE — The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), Region 19, has set an Aug. 6 hearing on charges that the Boeing Co. violated federal labor law during its recent contract talks with the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA) Local 2001.

Boeing is charged with threatening employees with discipline if they communicated with each other about potential layoffs due to bargaining, and for failing to provide SPEEA with information during contract negotiations.

Two additional charges were dismissed.

...Workers' compensation cuts still on the table

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assumptions:

1) Democrats in both the House and the governor's office will abandon their opposition to further tinkering with workers' compensation until the 2011 reforms are fully implemented; and

2) Passage of either SB 5127 or 5128 — it doesn't matter which — will save the state fund so much money that the state will lower workers' comp rates for all employers, presumably next year. This amid ongoing concerns shared by business, labor, and the government that reserve funds depleted by the recession need to be bolstered. The

state is already setting aside \$82 million into reserves this year, but has warned that rate increases may be necessary in the future to continue building up reserves. And yet, the Senate assumes that next year, rates will be significantly lowered.

File that first assumption under "Unlikely." And file the second under "Pure Fantasyland."

The only way the state could lower rates is if a truly extraordinary number of workers suddenly settled their claims for way less than they were worth. That is a nightmare scenario for these injured workers and their families. The truth is, such a scenario would increase state

costs because when these families' buy-out money runs out they will require public services and assistance.

The dubious assumptions necessary to try to resurrect these workers' compensation cuts undermine the credibility of the Senate budget. If these are the kinds of fiscal contortions necessary to achieve ideological policy goals in the Republican-controlled Senate, what other kind of fantasy-based assumptions are in there?

(Editor's Note: David Groves is the communications director for the Washington State Labor Council.)

CORRECTION:

In an article in the April 5 edition, "Oregon Nurses Association joins American Federation of Teachers," the Labor Press under-reported the number of workers represented by American Federation of Teachers-Oregon. New units of University of Oregon faculty and Oregon State University graduate research faculty bring AFT-Oregon membership to around 11,000, not 8,700 as was reported. Also, AFT-Oregon is not an autonomous AFT affiliate in Oregon, as it was described; it's a state council of 19 AFT locals.



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