



NORTHWEST

LABOR  
PRESSVolume 114  
Number 18  
September 20, 2013  
Portland

## Union members protest right-to-work strategy session

VANCOUVER, Wash. — Backers of proposed right-to-work initiatives in Oregon and Washington got a taste of what the political fight might look like Sept. 5 at Clark College.

More than 50 protesters — primarily from construction trades unions — greeted attendees of a strategy session on how to pass right-to-work referendums in Oregon and Washington. The event was sponsored by the anti-union Freedom Foundation of Olympia, Wash., and the Portland-headquartered Cascade Policy Institute.

Protesters blocked cars as attendees entered the college campus at 18700 SE Mill Plain Blvd., Vancouver. As the session was about to begin, a handful of protesters entered the building with signs and a bullhorn. Police were called and one protester was arrested for not leaving quickly enough.

“We want to let them know that they’re not going to come into Washington or Oregon without a fight,” said Eric Fanning, a member of Plumbers and Fitters Local 290. “We (labor) may have some disagreements, but on this issue we have total solidarity.”

The featured speaker at Clark College was Vincent Vernuccio of Michi-



Hank Washburn, a member of Plumbers and Fitters Local 290, joins more than 50 workers Sept. 5 protesting a “right-to-work” presentation at Clark College in Vancouver sponsored by the anti-union Freedom Foundation and Cascade Policy Institute.

gan’s Mackinac Center for Public Policy, the largest conservative state-level policy think-tank in the nation.

Last year, Michigan became the 24th state to enact a right-to-work law, though it wasn’t by a vote of the people. Michigan’s Republican-controlled Legislature and Republican governor passed a law making the payment of union dues voluntary for private-sector unions and most public-sector unions (with police and firefighters exempt).

Proposed initiatives in Oregon and Washington are restricted to public-sector worker unions. The Oregon initiative, dubbed the “Public Employee Choice Act,” would remove any requirement that public employees pay union dues or any share of the costs that unions incur to represent them. Under current Oregon law, public employees who are represented by unions pay either union dues, if they choose to be members, or reduced “fair share” fees, which cover the union’s cost of negotiating contracts and representing workers.

On Sept. 12, the Oregon Supreme Court ordered that the ballot title be rewritten. According to an Oregonian report, the court unanimously ruled that

the attorney general’s office needs to rewrite the ballot title for the measure to make clear the “free-rider effect” of allowing represented workers to avoid union dues.

The attorney general has five business days to submit a new ballot title. This issue of the Labor Press went to press before the new ballot title was announced.

Additionally, on Labor Day, Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber told a large crowd at a picnic at Oaks Park that he would oppose any attempts to turn Oregon into a right-to-work state.

“A right-to-work state means you have a right to work for less without a voice in the workplace,” Kitzhaber said. “A right-to-work state means you have a right to be exploited and ripped off and work at unsafe jobs and low wages and no benefits.”

Fanning, one of the protesting construction workers, said that if a right-to-work law is passed for public sector workers, “we’ll be next.”

## Oregon unions will convene to discuss future

BEND — On the heels of the national AFL-CIO convention in Los Angeles, the Oregon AFL-CIO will bring together union members from across the state for its biennial convention Sept. 27-29.

“In Oregon, we’re focused on finding new ways to help more workers,” said Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain. “You’ll see many of the same topics that were debated at the national AFL-CIO convention take center stage at our statewide convention.”

A central theme of the national AFL-CIO convention was building a broader, more inclusive labor movement to better support and give a voice to *all* workers — both those in a union and those who don’t have a union at their workplace.

“We must begin, here and now, today, the great work of reawakening a movement of working people — all working people,” national AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka declared in his keynote address. “Greed and privi-

(Turn to Page 3)

## Longshore & Warehouse Union leaves AFL-CIO

SAN FRANCISCO (PAI) — The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) on Aug. 29 ended its affiliation with the AFL-CIO. The action comes less than year after the ILWU joined with five other unions to form the Maritime Labor Alliance.

The newly established Alliance includes the ILWU, the American Radio Association, Inlandboatmen’s Union, the Marine Engineers’ Beneficial Association (MEBA), the International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots (MM&P), and the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA).

MM&P President Don Marcus is president of the Alliance, and MEBA President Mike Jewell is secretary-treasurer.

In a letter to AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka dated Aug. 29, 2013, ILWU President Robert McEllrath cited jurisdictional disputes as part of the reason for disaffiliating. McEllrath was particularly upset by the AFL-CIO’s decision to stay out of a conflict

his union had with Operating Engineers at EGT grain terminal in Longview, Washington. But McEllrath also criticized the AFL-CIO for “overly compromising positions” on a path to legalizing immigrants, on letting the health care revision law tax high-value health insurance plans, and on allowing immigrant visas to benefit corporations.

The ILWU represents 50,000 workers on the docks and in other industries in Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, Hawaii, and Panama. It has roots with the old Wobblies (International Workers of the World), and was an early affiliate of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). In 1950, the ILWU and 10 other unions were kicked out of the CIO for allegedly being led by communists. It wasn’t until 1988 that the ILWU joined the merged AFL-CIO.

At a press conference on Sept. 8 — before the start of the quadrennial AFL-CIO convention in Los Angeles — Trumka called the ILWU’s disaffilia-

tion a “tragic situation,” stating that he had no idea the ILWU was planning on exiting the AFL-CIO.

Later at the convention the ILA announced that it would remain with the AFL-CIO. ILA President Harold J. Daggett — noting that solidarity charters will not be offered to ILWU locals or any other union that departs — said his union valued its affiliations with state and local AFL-CIO councils and the protection they provided ILA members.

The following day, Daggett was elected to one of 55 seats on the AFL-CIO’s Executive Council.

“We are delighted that Harold Daggett now joins the AFL-CIO Executive Council,” said MM&P’s Marcus. “Our Maritime Labor Alliance is more important now than ever and Harold Daggett will provide the MLA with a strong voice to protect our maritime and labor interests.”

The ILWU is currently in a contract dispute with the Pacific Northwest

Grain Handlers’ Association, which covers six grain terminals in Oregon and Washington. In February, foreign-owned United Grain locked out ILWU Local 4 members in Vancouver, and in May, foreign-owned Columbia Grain locked out ILWU Local 8 members in Portland. No bargaining is taking place at this time.

Contract talks for West Coast dockworkers begins next year. The existing agreement expires June 30.

McEllrath concluded his letter to Trumka with a short olive branch. He said ILWU is “committed to working in solidarity” with other unions, including the federation and its members “for advancement of workers’ rights and progressive causes.”

(Editor’s Note: Local union officers of the ILWU sit on the executive boards of the Oregon AFL-CIO, the Northwest Oregon Labor Council, the Southwest Washington Central Labor Council, and the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO.)