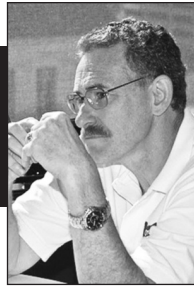


# Who's On Our Side?

By Tom Chamberlain



As I write this article, the president and Congress are working to reopen government and raise the debt ceiling. Most suspect that a "Grand Bargain" will be reached in the next week.

In the meantime, tens of thousands of public employees have been unpaid and sit idly at home and wait; millions of Americans haven't received the federal benefits they qualify for; highway funds have dried up and construction projects stopped, leaving thousands more without work; federal regulatory agencies are working at minimum staffing levels.

Whether you realize it or not, every American has been impacted.

The shutdown was failed political brinksmanship at the expense of our nation, at the expense of working men and women, at the expense of families, at the expense of the disabled, the elderly, and poor.

Rest assured that when the "Grand Bargain" is reached, businesses and the wealthy will be held harmless. They may even come out ahead, seeing their share of supporting our nation reduced.

The "Grand Bargain" will tell the rest of us — those whose jobs and livelihoods have been affected, that to end the shutdown we must take on other burdens — to pay. The 99 percent will see more promises reneged on, and a continuing of decades of unraveling America's

already tattered social safety net.

This is a pessimistic prediction, for sure. It is based on three decades of an increasingly pro-business pro-wealth agenda based on the premise that if you decrease federal, state, and local funding responsibilities for the 1 percent, jobs will be created. This agenda believes that we can build the middle class from the top down. It is Ronald Reagan's trickle-down economic strategy on steroids.

This strategy didn't work for a 1980s America, and after three decades of shifting more and more funding responsibility from the 1 percent to the 99 percent, it should be clear that this is nothing short of a disastrous policy for our nation.

Oregon reached its own "Grand Bargain" this month, raising much-needed funding for public education. Part of the funding package included a tax increase from wealthy seniors and some businesses. But the lion's share of the revenue came from state and local retirees and future retirees — Oregonians who, on average, receive less than \$30,000 per year in retirement.

The Oregonian newspaper — and almost all of the business associations in the state — mounted months of campaigning focusing on the PERS \$1 million Club: those few PERS retirees, such as retired University of Oregon football

coach Mike Bellotti, who earn over \$500,000 per year. This campaign was designed to create political leverage to reduce PERS benefits far below what was agreed to in contract.

This classic diversionary strategy changed the focus to reducing the cost of government, rather than looking at who is paying for government. They were successful, and took a Grand Bargain victory lap across the media.

There was no mention of the sacrifice of the hard-working Oregonians who will collectively forgo billions in promised retiree benefits in our effort to increase funding to state and local governments.

"Grand bargains" equate to business give-aways and worker take-aways. After 30 years of economic and funding policies that have resulted in fewer middle-class jobs and less funding for essential programs, while trying to appease the 1%ers with more and more incentives, history has taught working families when they hear government is trying to reach a "Grand Bargain," it is time to hold onto your wallets very tightly.

History has taught us that no Grand Bargain is on working people's side.

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

## Federal shutdown hurts rank-and-file workers

Portland members of American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) rallied outside the Portland Federal Building on Oct. 1 — Day 1 of the federal government shutdown.

In the photo right, Amanda Schroeder, president of Portland-based AFGE Local 2157, tells Fox News that many federal employees are either locked out from working or are required to work for free. Either way, they won't get paychecks until the U.S. House ends its refusal to fund the government. Majority House Republicans have tried to make President Barack Obama and the Democratic-led Senate agree to concessions — including delay or repeal of Obamacare — in exchange for voting to continue funding the government.

Until some agreement is reached, an estimated 800,000 federal employees, including 27,700 in Oregon, are going without pay, and the public is going without myriad services.

The shutdown entered its third week as this issue went to press.

On Oct. 12, AFGE national President J. David Cox Sr. sent a letter to



Obama asking the president to consider declaring an emergency that would allow FEMA to make zero interest loans to any federal worker who is not receiving his or her paycheck.

The national AFL-CIO is calling on

union members and the public to share stories of how they're affected by the shutdown, and to sign a petition calling on Congress to end it, at <http://www.afl-cio.org/Legislation-and-Politics/Shut-down>.

## Local Motion

September 20, 2013

A list of Oregon and Washington workplaces deciding whether to be union represented — as reported to the National Labor Relations Board and the Oregon Employment Relations Board.

### Voting in union elections

Date	Workplace (Location)	Yes	No
??/????/????	?????	?	?

### Requesting a union election

**Editor's note:** The federal government shutdown has closed National Labor Relations Board offices until further notice. Our monthly feature listing unionization elections will return as soon as it reopens.

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