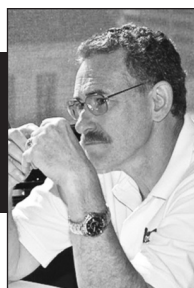


Who's On Our Side?

By Tom Chamberlain



On Nov. 1, more than 800,000 Oregonians got a little hungrier.

That's because \$40 billion was cut from the Federal Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) this month. The federal program provides money to buy food for 47 million Americans. SNAP funding was increased by \$40 billion as part of the 2009 federal stimulus legislation. From an economic standpoint, the spending increase made sense in 2009.

It still makes sense today, too. Every SNAP dollar spent generates \$1.80 for the American economy. The \$40 billion in SNAP funding has a \$72 billion impact on the American economy, and in the pockets of workers. This cut actually hurts our economy.

While our economy is slowly recovering and jobs are being created, those jobs tend to be low-wage jobs that will not support a family. They're Walmart and Burger King jobs.

Eighty percent of SNAP families have at least one family member employed. On average, SNAP spends approximately \$1.40 per meal. The \$40 billion cut results in the loss of billions of meals for poor, but working, people.

To put this into perspective — for an average family of four, the cuts will result in 21 fewer meals per month.

Who receives SNAP benefits?

21 percent of Oregonians who live in poverty (\$11,500 for an individual, \$23,500 for a family). And 87 percent of recipients live in households with children, seniors or people with disabilities. In fact, 1 in 4 U.S. children live in a household that receives food stamps, and 1 in 5 households with children still report sometimes not having enough money to buy food. 900,000 recipients are veterans.

Whether you and your family suffer from hunger or not, you are impacted. Hunger results in higher risks for mental disorders, iron deficiency and other nutritional deficiencies, headaches, stomach aches, respiratory illnesses and increased hospitalization. All told, in 2010 hunger-related health care costs were estimated at \$130.5 billion.

Hungry kids have a harder time succeeding in school, and are 50 percent more likely to miss school days, leading to staggering disadvantages like being twice as likely to be suspended and 50 percent more likely to repeat a grade.

Proponents of the cuts state that the increase in SNAP funding was designed to stimulate the economy and give relief to unemployed families, and now that our economy is on the rebound it is time to end the SNAP stimulus component.

The problem is that 93 percent

of the economic gains since the beginning of the Great Recession have gone to the top 1 percent.

Job creation has not been in middle class jobs. Low-wage jobs are swelling the ranks of the working poor. The shedding of the middle class public sector at the federal, state, and local levels has only compounded our economic problems. For far too many, the Great Recession isn't over.

If the neocons and the corporatists continue to advance an agenda of low-wage jobs in exchange for increased wealth to the 1 percent, the demands for social safety net programs like SNAP will only increase.

This is exactly the wrong time for Congress to be defunding our social safety net. One just has to walk the streets of Portland and see the swelling ranks of the homeless to understand that our people are hungry, cold, and ill, and our government is failing them.

It is time to contact your senator and congressperson. It's time to ask what side they're on. And frankly, it's time to do nothing less than demand that they restore the SNAP cuts.

Tom Chamberlain is president of the Oregon AFL-CIO.

AFL-CIO steps up pro-immigration reform drive with \$1 million ad buy

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) — The AFL-CIO is stepping up its drive to pass comprehensive immigration reform with a two-week, \$1 million-plus television advertising blitz targeting nine House Republicans.

In a Nov. 6 telephone press conference, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said the point is to force House Republican leaders to let lawmakers vote on the comprehensive reform bill before the end of this year. Unions and their allies won't accept anything less than that, he warned.

"The TV ad campaign has two main objectives: To spur House Republicans into action on immigration reform this year, and to hold Republican members

of Congress accountable for their hostile statements about Latino immigrants," he said.

The Senate previously passed legislation to bring 11 million undocumented people out of the shadows. That includes 7.5 million undocumented workers, who would be immediately covered by labor law.

That's important because some employers exploit their workers by underpaying them and employing them in substandard conditions, threatening to call immigration officials on any workers who stand up for themselves. Others use the threat of firing U.S. workers and hiring undocumented workers to replace them in order to drive down wages and benefits and to kill union organizing drives.

Trumka stressed the justice of comprehensive immigration reform, denounced the daily deportation of 1,000+ undocumented workers whom the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement Service picks up, and

said the ads would put pressure on GOP lawmakers to pressure their leaders for an up-or-down vote.

If comprehensive reform comes up on the House floor, Trumka and the others said, it would pass with overwhelming Democratic support, plus a handful of Republicans.

Despite majority support nationwide, House Republicans won't consider the comprehensive bill. They are proposing a piece-by-piece plan, which does not include a path to citizenship.

The TV ad campaign will run on Spanish-language stations in Atlanta, Orlando, Denver, and Bakersfield, Calif., Trumka said. The ads urge lawmakers to push their leaders for the vote. The subtext is the political consequences if they don't.

Hispanics, now the largest minority, voted in huge numbers in 2012 and the off-year 2013 elections, and voted overwhelmingly Democratic.

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Portland-based Boilermakers Local 500 consolidates with Local 242 in Spokane

SPOKANE — Portland-based Boilermakers Local 500 has consolidated with Spokane-based Local 242, announced Business Manager Mark Keffeler. The consolidation boosts Local 242's membership to nearly 550 shop and field construction boilermakers, with jurisdiction in Eastern Washington starting at the Canadian border, in Southwest Washington to Longview, and in Oregon.

Local 242 was established in 1960. It maintains a large training center in Spokane and is politically active in the state.

At the time of the consolidation, Local 500 — chartered on July 1, 1984 in Salem — represented approximately 200 field construction boilermakers in Oregon and Southwest Washington. Its business manager, Darin McCarthy, had been out on medical leave since February, following complications from back surgery. An interim manager was running the local, and it was still struggling financially due to the Great

Recession.

Keffeler met with the Oregon boilermakers in October to explain the consolidation. Keffeler told the Labor Press that he hopes to maintain the Portland training center located at 2515 NE Columbia Blvd. He has reached out to Boilermakers Local 104, which represents workers at the shipyards, in regard to sharing the training facility. Local 104 is headquartered in Seattle, but has a satellite office in Vancouver.

Keffeler also wants to maintain an affiliation with the Oregon Building and Construction Trades Council.

Several members from Oregon attended Local 242's union meeting and barbecue in Spokane Nov. 9.

Keffeler's goal is to hold bi-monthly informational meetings in Portland starting next year.

He said the work picture for Boilermakers looks strong in the months ahead. "We have a lot of work on the books, it just hasn't broke yet," he said. "We're going to survive."

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