

Oregon Service Employees locals 503 and 49 discuss merger

Merged union would be 65,000-strong in government, health care and building services

Service Employees International Union's (SEIU) two Oregon affiliates are discussing a merger: 55,000-member SEIU Local 503 represents state workers, home care workers, and nursing home workers around the state, while 10,000-member Local 49 represents janitors, security guards, and hospital support workers mostly in the Portland metro area.

Discussions have been under way since late 2012, when members of the Local 49 Executive Board approached Local 503 about it. Since then, the Executive Boards have held joint meetings and formed committees to work out details. Local 503 is also holding meetings around the state, some of which are taking place this month.

In the first round of meetings, members discussed benefits and pitfalls of a merger, or "unification" as proponents are calling it. Unification could expand SEIU's ability to organ-

ize hospital workers, janitors and security guards outside Local 49's Portland stronghold. And it could promote greater unity against anti-union assaults like those that have taken place in Wisconsin and Michigan. On the other hand it could present conflicts: raising wages for members who work at Kaiser Permanente, for example, could affect premiums for other members who get their health care there.

Several committees are working on details of the merger proposal, including governance structure and dues. Members of both unions pay 1.7 percent of payroll in union dues, but Local 503 members pay an additional \$2.75 a month above that. The two unions have similar structures: An elected board and president oversee an executive director, who directs staff.

Local 49 began in 1921 as a janitors local. Local 503 started out as the independent Oregon Public Employees Union, and affiliated with SEIU in 1980, becoming SEIU Local 503. Both have been growing: Local 49 is up over 4,000 members since 2000, while Local 503 is up by 30,000 members.

One thing proponents agree on: The new entity would not be known as Local 503 or 49, but would get a new number.

Leaders of the two unions expect to make a decision in January about whether to move forward with a merger. If they recommend unification, the final decision would go to each union's membership to vote on separately, some time in Spring. That would be followed by a founding convention if the merger is ratified.

SEIU is an affiliate of the Change to Win labor federation. It does not have a Solidarity Charter agreement with the Oregon AFL-CIO, but it does with some central labor councils. The Oregon SEIU locals do collaborate with the state labor federation as well as with the Oregon Education Association.

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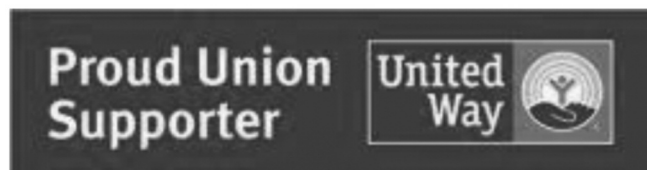
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Local Motion

October 2013

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

Voting in union elections

Date	Workplace (Location) Union	Yes	No	
9/26	ATI Pacific Cast Technologies (Albany) USW Local 6163	93	133	👍
10/1	Curry Community Health (Gold Beach) SEIU Local 503	12	10	👍

Unionizing by majority sign-up

Date	Workplace (Location) Union	Number of workers in unit
9/27	Douglas County deputy district attorneys (Roseburg) Oregon AFSCME	9
10/10	Central Oregon Coast Fire & Rescue District (Waldport) IAFF Local 4619	4

Requesting a union election

Workplace (Location) Union	Number of workers in unit
Hydro-Temp Mechanical sheet metal workers (Wilsonville) Sheet Metal Local 16	14
Samaritan North Lincoln Hospital service, maintenance, techs (Lincoln City) SEIU Local 49	116
W. R. Grace & Co. chemical factory (Albany) Machinists District Lodge W24	38
Providence Portland Med. Ctr biomedical services (Portland) Operating Engineers Local 701	14
Legacy Good Samaritan environmental waste (Portland) Operating Engineers Local 701	3

LEGEND

👍 : workers will be union-represented 👎 : workers will be on their own



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