

# ...‘Right-to-work’ initiative dropped in Oregon

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lic Employee Choice Act,” which would have removed any requirement that public employees pay union dues or any share of the costs that unions incur to represent them).

Similar right-to-work laws have been passed across the country in recent years, most notably in Wisconsin, Ohio and Indiana.

Also withdrawn were union-backed initiative petitions 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 29, 30, 32, 33 and 35. Our Oregon sponsored all but IP 35. Ten of the measures were different versions of proposals to raise taxes on big corporations and the wealthy. The others were counter-initiatives to IP 9. Under Oregon law, if two ballot measures contradict each other and both pass, the one that gets the most votes prevails.

IP 35, “Employee Rights At Work,” was sponsored by Oregon AFSCME Council 75 political director Joe Baessler. It said that any initiative that alters laws on minimum wage, family leave, payroll deduction, or collective bargaining would be required to describe current law and specify whether the initiative enhances or restricts employee rights, a determination that would be made by the state labor commissioner.

Two other initiatives — one pro-

union and one anti-union — were not withdrawn.

Initiative Petition 2 is a constitutional amendment that would prohibit public employees from using payroll deductions to transfer funds to/on behalf of unions. It has yet to be certified for signature gathering. The chief petitioner is Nicholas Urhausen of Eugene.

Initiative Petition 36, “Protect Workers Right to Contribute,” names Service Employees International Union Local 503 political director Arthur Towers as chief petitioner. IP 36 says that “no law shall restrict the ability of employers and their employees (either individually or through their bargaining representative) to negotiate and agree upon terms governing payroll deductions.”

Neither petition has been certified for signature gathering.

In a press release following Gov. Kitzhaber’s announcement, Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain thanked everyone who was involved in the conversations that removed the measures from the ballot.

“I look forward to working with union members, community leaders, and employers in our state as we continue to chart the best path ahead for Oregon.”

“The best news out of this deal is that Oregon workers will not have to

face a major, multi-million dollar attack from out-of-state corporate interests,” said Scott Moore, spokesperson for Our Oregon. “While the Koch Brothers and ALEC are moving these anti-worker laws around the country, we won’t have to face that threat this year.”

In a joint press release, the Oregon Education Association and SEIU said that as advocates for working people, public education, and an economy that

works for the middle class, “(we) will be working closely together to secure more funding for schools and the services that Oregon’s communities need and deserve. We’ll be fighting to make sure that big corporations and those who are not paying their share are doing their part. And we’ll fight to keep Oregon the kind of place where working parents can realistically dream of a better tomorrow for their kids.”

Chamberlain added that the agreement doesn’t mean labor will sit out the 2014 election.

“There are still important decisions to be made, and now that our state isn’t fighting for the future of the middle class and our economic bottom line on the ballot, it is crucial to turn our attention to electing pro-worker leaders who can fend off battles like this in our Legislature,” he said.

## ...Parkrose won’t contract out bus drivers

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the head of the district’s parent-led fundraising organization. And the statewide leadership of OSEA and of the Oregon AFL-CIO showed up to show their opposition.

Yet OSEA leaders didn’t know what the outcome would be going into the Feb. 24 board meeting. Of the five board members, only Portland schoolteacher Erick Flores had openly criticized the outsourcing proposal. OSEA thought retired teacher Mary Lu Baetkey would also lean against it, but software engineer and board chair Ed Grassel was plainly for it, and Port of Portland HR manager James Trujillo signaled his support too. That left vice

chair Thuy Tran, an eye doctor, as the swing vote. When she spoke against the plan, the room erupted in applause.

“We need to know our kids,” Tran said. “We need to control our environment from A to Z.”

Reading, writing, and arithmetic are important, Tran said, but the district is responsible for much more than that. Three quarters of the district’s 3,500 students are eligible for free or reduced cost lunch. Parkrose School District takes responsibility for the physical, emotional and psychological well-being, the meals — even the clothing — of the kids in its charge. And that requires a team effort, Tran said, from the time students are picked up in the morning until they return home.

Tran likened the Parkrose staff cuts of recent years to amputating body parts, and said she would refuse to cut any more.

And with that, she joined Baetkey and Flores in a 3-2 vote to reject the proposal to contract with First Student.

OSEA represents school support workers, and has repeatedly fought school district efforts to contract out school bus, custodial, and cafeteria operations.

OSEA Executive Director Rick Shidaker said he sees no villains at Parkrose. Just as in other districts, the push to outsource at Parkrose is a response to real budget limitations. But the union contends that slashing district worker wages and benefits is not the right solution.

“Every single worker has value,” Shidaker said, “and every single worker should have a living wage, which includes the ability to retire after a long career.”

In Parkrose, OSEA did everything it could to reach out to the community, and found that its message resonated.

“The community reacted, and the message got to the board,” Shidaker said. “They recognized the importance of keeping it local, and keeping it in the community. This is not just a victory for unions. It’s a victory for the community.”

## Portland teachers ratify new contract

Teachers at Portland Public Schools voted Feb. 27 to approve a new three-year contract, which was ratified by the district board March 3.

The deal was reached Feb. 18 — two days before a strike was set to begin — and involved compromises on both sides. The district let go its demand to eliminate a provision limiting teacher workload, and went the other direction, agreeing to hire 150 teachers to reduce class sizes and workloads for teachers.

Portland Association of Teachers agreed to phase out an early retirement incentive, and simplify the transfer process. The contract also provides annual raises of 2.3 percent, and adds two more days to the school year. The district will continue to pay 93 percent of health insurance premiums.

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