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Strike averted at City of Portland

DCTU signs off on compromise language over contracting out

City of Portland and the seven-union 1,600-member District Council of Trade Unions (DCTU) reached tentative agreement on a new four-year contract shortly after midnight March 28 — after 16 straight hours of mediated bargaining. DCTU leaders say they were prepared to issue a 10-day strike notice if the session had not produced a deal.

In an earlier March 11 mediation session, the two sides had worked out a compromise preserving members' right to take "comp time," but still were at odds over job security going into the March 28 session. The breakthrough was a compromise on a clause that limits the City's ability to contract out. The City had proposed to basically gut that clause, known as Article 6, when it started bargaining last spring. Article 6 said the City may not contract out members' work unless it first demonstrated that doing so would save money, and that the savings wouldn't come from lower wages and benefits. After much push-back from the DCTU, the City added a statement that it didn't intend to privatize its workforce, but could contract out under a number of specific conditions. One of the conditions was if the City workers lacked the proper equipment or skills to do a job. But that prompted speculation among DCTU members that the City would let equipment



SIGNING ON THE DOTTED LINE. Rob Wheaton, chief negotiator for the seven-union District Council of Trade Unions, signs a tentative agreement March 28 that if ratified, will be a new four-year union contract for 1,600 City of Portland employees. The hand on the left belongs to his counterpart, Labor Relations director Julia Getchell.

fall into disrepair, or simply declare that workers lacked the right skill — in order to contract out their work.

In the end, the City added a specific commitment to maintain equipment and skills training.

"They've assured us they will continue to invest in proper equipment and skills as methods evolve," said AFSCME Local 189 member Rob Martineau, a Water Bureau crew leader and member of the bargaining team.

The new Article 6 also says no employees will lose their jobs as a result of contracting out.

The tentative agreement would be retroactive to July 1, 2013 and would run through June 30, 2017.

Workers likely won't be thrilled about the wage increases in the agreement, DCTU chief negotiator Rob Wheaton said, but city bargaining units in police, emergency communications, and recreation centers have already accepted the same offer — a 0.9 percent wage increase retroactive to Aug. 29, 2013, and increases equal to the increase in the Consumer Price Index in subsequent years (minimum 1 percent and maximum 5 percent.)

The tentative agreement now goes out to affiliated unions for ratification votes. DCTU members rejected a previous tentative agreement in February, and then overwhelmingly said "no" to an even worse "last best offer" from the City in mid-March. But Wheaton said he's confident this tentative agreement will pass,

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Union rep running strong campaign for Oregon House

By **DON MCINTOSH**
Associate Editor

The union movement has a chance this year to enlarge the Oregon Legis-

lature's informal "labor caucus" — lawmakers with a background in organized labor. Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) union representative Rob

Nosse is running for state representative, and the Oregon AFL-CIO and other labor organizations are devoting considerable resources to his campaign.

Nosse [rhymes with dose], a Democrat, is running in House District 42, the inner Southeast Portland district that extends from I-84 to Reed College and from the Willamette River to 33rd, 50th, and 62nd Avenues. Nosse and five other Democrats are vying to replace Jules Bailey, the district's current representative, who is running for Multnomah County Commission. Whoever gets the most votes from among the district's 26,035 registered Democrats in the May 20 primary is considered certain to win office in November, since no Republican filed to run in the district where only 6 percent of registered voters are Republican.

"I think it's very important to get people that have a union perspective in [the state Capitol]," Nosse told the Labor Press, "people who have struggled to get a contract, struggled to bargain for benefits and decent wages and decent working conditions. I understand

that in my gut, because I've spent my career trying to do those things, to make work better and more humane."

Nosse, 46, is an Ohio native who was active in student government in college, and eventually headed the Ohio Student Association. After graduating from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, with a philosophy degree, he moved to Oregon in 1992 to direct the Oregon Student Association. There he got to know labor organizations while lobbying the Legislature for better state college funding. The acquaintance led to short-term political jobs for Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Oregon AFSCME Council 75, and Oregon Education Association, and in 1996, state workers union SEIU Local 503 hired him as an organizer. In 2000, he joined the staff at SEIU Local 49, which represents hospital support workers, and in 2004, he went to work for ONA. Today he helps bargain and enforce union contracts covering 1,200 ONA members at Providence Portland Medical Center, Providence Hood

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NLRB says athletes at Northwestern can unionize

CHICAGO (PAI) — Northwestern University football players won the right to form a union after National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) Chicago Regional Director Peter Sung Ohr ruled March 26 the players "all squarely fall within the [National Labor Relations] Act's broad definition of 'employee' when one considers the common law definition of 'employee.'"

Northwestern, a private university, says it will appeal the decision.

The ruling doesn't impact public universities.

In January, Northwestern quarterback Kain Colter, with the support of the United Steelworkers, filed with the NLRB union authorization cards from the players seeking to join the College Athletes Players Association (CAPA).

During a series of NLRB hearings, the university argued against the players' right to form a union, claiming they were not employees and thus ineligible.

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Oregon Nurses Association's Rob Nosse (left) chose to get on the ballot by collecting 500 signatures, rather than by paying a \$25 filing fee.