

Sass ends long career at Machinists Lodge W24

Dan Sass is set to retire this month, ending a long career as secretary-treasurer of Machinists/Woodworkers District W24.



Sass, 64, was elected secretary-treasurer of then-Machinists District Lodge 24 in July 1991. He was tapped to fill the remainder of the term vacated by Jay Bormann, who resigned to take a job with the international union.

In 2011, the Machinists and Woodworkers merged, which created District W24. Sass was tinkering with the idea of retiring at the time the merger talks unfolded, but decided against it, he said, because he was in the middle of his term as S-T, and he wanted to see a smooth merger transition.

Sass' term expires in December. Chris Taylor, secretary-treasurer of Lodge 1005 employed at Freightliner, was tapped to complete the term, although going forward it will be a part-time position.

Sass joined Machinists Lodge 1432 in 1971. In his early years he worked as a warehouseman at Kaiser Jeep, American Motors/Chrysler, and Boyd's Coffee. From 1982 to 1991 he ran his own auto repair shop in Portland while maintaining his union membership.

He served Local 1432 as secretary-treasurer for 10 years. He also held posts as auditor, trustee, recording sec-

retary and as a delegate to the district council.

For many years he served as secretary-treasurer of the Oregon Machinists Council, and he represented Lodge W24 on the Machinists Non-Partisan Political League (MNPL) National Planning Committee. He was a trustee to the IAM Health and Welfare Plan and the Nelson Trust, and he served as an adviser to the District W24 401(k) plan.

He also represented the Machinists Union on the Executive Board of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council.

Until this year, Sass has been master of ceremonies at the Machinists annual veterans pin awards dinner. He started doing it in 1991. The event, which draws several hundred members, retirees and spouses, includes a huge raffle. Sass purchases all of the raffle prizes at a unionized Fred Meyer store.

In his role as secretary-treasurer, Sass helps coordinate the annual Machinists Golf tournament to raise money for Guide Dogs of America. In 2002, he received the "Gift of Sight" award at the annual William Winpisinger Charity Banquet in Las Vegas. (The late-Winpisinger was general president of the Machinists Union.) More than 1,000 people from around the nation attended the banquet to honor Sass and Harley-Davidson CEO



Dan Sass (right), has been a regular at the annual Labor Day picnic at Oaks Park, where he sold raffle tickets to raise money for the Machinists Non-partisan Political League. Sass is retiring this month as secretary-treasurer of the Machinists District W24. He has served in that capacity for 23 years.

Jeffrey Bleustein.

Sass also is a regular at the Labor Day picnic at Oaks Park, where he sells raffle tickets for the union's political action fund, MNPL.

A native of North Dakota, Sass has lived in Portland since 1969.

Sass says in retirement he intends to

play more golf and spend time with his wife Kim and granddaughter Lacey. His daughter Angela manages the Machinists/Boilermakers Federal Credit Union. His youngest daughter Samantha is a college student studying to be a nurse.

IBEW attorney Norm Malbin rests his case

Norm Malbin, a tenacious advocate for working people, retired July 4 after 21 years as an in-house attorney for International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 48.

During that time, he helped Local 48 fight labor abuses in the electrical contracting industry, and helped hundreds of members with their own private legal problems. He also did occasional work for smaller IBEW locals in Oregon, like Local 280 and Local 932.

Malbin is also known throughout the local labor movement for having developed an annual labor law conference. The conference has trained hundreds of union stewards, officers, and staff over the last 18 years — both to know what rights workers have under the law, and how to fight for them.

"I would not have ever represented management," Malbin says. "I chose to walk on this side of the street."

Malbin, 65, is the son of physician Morris Malbin, who provided medical care to Kaiser Portland shipyard workers and their families during World War Two. After the war, Malbin's father was one of a handful of doctors who continued that practice, with the support of local unions, which later became Kaiser Permanente.

Norm went to college at the University of Denver, driving a truck for Rus-

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SEIU 503 political director departs after decades of service to labor

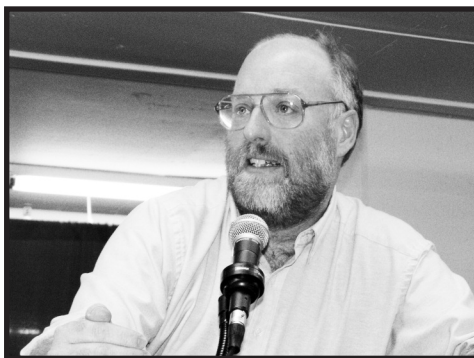
Arthur Towers, the long-serving political director at Oregon's biggest union, left Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 503 July 18 to work for the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association (OTLA).

Towers, 54, said recent health issues led him to consider a less stressful job. His focus at OTLA — consumer protection — will keep him plenty busy, but Towers said it will be less 24-7 than defending 57,000 public employees in the state capitol.

His departure ends two decades of involvement with labor.

Towers grew up in Wisconsin, Rhode Island, and Missouri, and was drawn to politics at an early age. He dropped out of Washington University in St. Louis to work on political campaigns, including a successful 1978 fight against an anti-union "right-to-work" ballot measure. For Towers, it was a clearcut workers' rights issue: His father, an English teacher, had been fired from a job at University of Wisconsin-Whitewater for supporting an unsuccessful campaign to unionize with the Teamsters.

Towers worked for 18 months at Missouri Public Interest Research Group (MoPIRG), six years at the Missouri Coalition for the Environment, and then as a consultant on ballot measure and advocacy campaigns around the country. In 1994, that work brought him to Oregon for the first time — to campaign against Measure 15, a constitutional amendment that would have required the state to fully fund schools (and leave other priorities like public safety and senior services to fight over what was left.) He got to know then-SEIU Local 503 executive director Alice Dale, and back in St. Louis,



ARTHUR TOWER

he went to work for SEIU Missouri/Kansas State Council in 1997. When Tim Nesbitt was elected president of the Oregon AFL-CIO in 2000, Towers replaced Nesbitt as executive director of SEIU Oregon State Council, which coordinates state-level politics for SEIU Locals 503 and 49. Three years later, Towers went to work for Dale as political director of SEIU Local 503.

Towers looks back at a number of successes during his labor career. In 2000, Oregon became the first state in the country to use a ballot measure to extend collective bargaining rights to home care workers. Adding home care workers — and later providers of child care, foster care, and care for the developmentally disabled — SEIU Local 503 more than doubled from its 2000 membership of 25,000.

"When they got started, they weren't even considered workers; they were considered domestics," Towers said. "It's been exciting to see the fruits of our labor help low-income working women rise

from minimum wage to \$13 an hour." Towers also helped the home care worker campaign develop leaders, who became effective advocates for improved care.

Another high point, Towers said, was the work SEIU did to preserve public services during the state budget crisis in the Great Recession that began in 2008. Local 503 helped state agencies become more efficient by legislation mandating a reduction in the number of managers, and it helped pass 2010 Measures 66 and 67 to temporarily increase taxes on the wealthy and corporations.

A personal low point was the 2013 special session, when the governor Local 503 had helped to elect brokered a second round of cuts to public employee pensions, while passing new tax breaks for large corporations.

During the legislative session, Towers oversaw a staff of six, plus a contract lobbyist, keeping track of multiple committees and up to 150 budget line items. Just about every facet of state government affects Local 503 members, Towers says, from pension rules to health care policy to revenue and budgets.

Towers said one of the things he's most proud of is helping to build up a program for members to come to the Capitol and visit legislators. Every two years, hundreds come to the Capitol to tell their story. Local 503 organizes 15 lobby days, bringing in groups of 20 to 100 members. Members get a little bit of training, and then they have a real dialogue with legislators, Towers said.

"They hear from agency directors all the time, but they almost never hear from frontline workers," Towers said.

Though leaving labor, Towers says he won't be a stranger: OTLA is frequently an ally, working with labor on worker's compensation and other issues. Towers said his focus on consumer protection means he'll be taking on the big banks, big oil, big insurance.

"Trial lawyers fight for the injured, victimized or defrauded," Towers said, "and the same people who harm workers also defraud consumers."

Towers is succeeded as Local 503's political director by Melissa Unger, who was executive director of SEIU Oregon State Council.

...Rick Henson

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fighters and not be afraid of them, because the things we're fighting for are worthwhile."

In retirement, Henson has a long list of to-dos, including rehabbing a 32-foot boat, and working on fences, rock walls, and terraced hillsides on his property. He'll also join his wife, Pat Riggs-Henson, in the AFSCME Retirees chapter. Riggs-Henson, a longtime activist in AFSCME Local 2831, retired in 2010 after 31 years at Lane County and now serves as an elected member of the Springfield Utility Board. Together 30 years, they have four adult children (one deceased), five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. They'll continue to be involved in the Lane County Labor Council and in local community campaigns.

Portland-based AFSCME staff rep JaNell Earley will transfer to Eugene to take over Henson's assignments. Earley most recently worked with Local 88 (Multnomah County).