

...Police escorts in Vancouver

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Jeff Johnson, president of the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, said Mitsui-United Grain is trying to "starve workers into submission," and having government-provided escorts facilitates this strategy and has caused the dispute to drag on longer. He added:

"(Ending the escorts) rightfully puts the state in a neutral position regarding this management dispute. While the state provided escort services, United Grain was able to carry on business as usual while depriving some 50 workers of their jobs and providing little incentive for the company to reach a negotiated settlement with the union."

But Sen. Benton sees things differently, and in his ethics complaint against Inslee says the governor "has jeopardized a multibillion-dollar industry in our state."

Benton, who is part of what has been dubbed the "Millionaire Coalition Caucus" of wealthy legislators who control the State Senate, is the subject of an ethics-related probe himself. The state Auditor's Office is investigating his dual role as a state Senator and as the Clark County director of environmental services, a \$114,000 position for which The Olympian noted "he has no obvious qualifications" and was hired by Republican colleagues without posting the job or interviewing any other candidates. (In the process, Benton's state pension could reportedly triple to nearly \$70,000 a year.)

The Auditor's Office is investigating whether Benton violated an agreement he signed with the county administrator to take leave of absence from his county job during legislative sessions. He reportedly did both jobs during the special session last winter.

(Editor's Note: David Groves is Publications Director for the Washington State Labor Council. He edits The Stand blog.)



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We wish our clients and friends in organized labor all the best on Labor Day!

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