

SW Washington students get taste of construction careers



Jack Miller and Tom Wishard (in baseball cap), field reps with Operating Engineers Local 701, help a student operate a heavy equipment computer simulator at the fourth annual Cowlitz Wahkiakum Construction Fair hosted by Kelso High School. Several craft unions and their respective training centers participated in the event, which attracted 1,200 students.

KELSO — Construction trade unions participated in the Cowlitz Wahkiakum Construction Fair Sept. 26 at the Cowlitz Expo Center. The fair, in its fourth year, was hosted by Kelso High School and drew approximately 1,200 students from Cowlitz, Wahkiakum and Clark counties.

The fair is designed to introduce students to careers that they might not otherwise be familiar with. Some of the union crafts displaying their wares were Operating Engineers Local 701; Plumbers and Fitters Local 26; the Oregon and Southwest Washington Mason Trades Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee; the Washington and Northern Idaho District Council of Laborers and Local 335; Cowlitz Fire Department; IBEW Local 48 and the National Electrical Contractors Association

Training Center; Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local 1, and the Washington State Labor Council.

Union signatory contractor JH Kelly donated hard hats, eye protection and safety vests for every student that participated in the fair.

"This was an amazing community effort that had a huge impact on our high school students who took advantage of such a great opportunity," said Mollie DuBois, a career specialist at Kelso High School and event organizer.

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SW Washington Labor Council backs Clark County charter change

Amendment would add two members to County Commission, cut its pay, and allow initiatives

VANCOUVER — The Southwest Washington Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO encourages Clark County residents to vote "yes" on a proposed Home Rule Charter that will be on the Nov. 4 ballot.

Last November voters elected five county residents from each of the three Clark County commissioner districts to serve as a Board of Freeholders — charged with drafting new rules for Clark County government. The 15-member Board was a mix of Democrats, Republicans and independents. Members unanimously elected Nan Henriksen, former mayor of Camas, as chair. They elected Joe Zarelli, former Republican state senator from Ridgefield, as vice chair, and former Democratic state representative Val Ogden of Vancouver as secretary. [Val passed away after completing a partial term and the Board appointed Dan Ogden to fill his wife's unexpired term.]

The freeholders, who served without pay, met for about six months and came up with a proposal that makes three main changes.

Their proposed charter strengthens citizen representation by going from three commissioners to five council members, with four elected by district

and one at-large (the chair). Salaries are lowered so that the cost for all five will be no more than the current cost for three. Salaries of the policymakers would be reduced from \$102,000 to \$53,000. The chair, with additional responsibilities, would make 20 percent more (\$63,600). Adjustments to the salary would be based on percentage changes established for state legislators by the Washington State Salary Commission. The elected partisan offices of Clark County Assessor, Auditor, Clerk, Prosecuting Attorney, Sheriff and Treasurer are retained under the proposed charter.

The second change puts the county under professional management. Under the current commissioner form of government, three commissioners serve as "co-chief executives" as well as "policymakers." Under the proposed council-manager form of government the council would hire/fire a professional manager who has the responsibility and authority to implement policies adopted by the council and to manage the administrative branch. The council would serve as the legislative branch: setting policy, adopting the budget and representing the County on various boards.

Third, the proposed charter would give voters the right to initiate and enact legislation through the initiative process similar to the way statewide initiatives are considered on the ballot. Through the referendum process voters could petition to have an ordi-

nance that has been enacted by the Council submitted to the voters for their approval or rejection. Unlike in the current system, Clark County voters could change the charter in the future if they so choose.

"This proposed home rule charter was truly created by the people, for the people," said Shannon Walker, president of the Southwest Washington Central Labor Council.

The Charter YES campaign is led by co-chairs Clark County Sheriff Garry Lucas and Betty Sue Morris, a former Democratic legislator and county commissioner. Community members John McDonagh, Nan Henriksen, Greg Kimsey and Judie Stanton serve as members of the steering committee, along with the co-chairs.

The charter will become law if approved by a simple majority of voters in the general election. It would go into effect Jan. 1, 2015. On that day the legislative and administrative powers will be separated into two branches of government. The charter provides for the election of two additional council members during 2015 who will be seated on Jan. 1, 2016. The transitioning of the salary decrease would occur over two years.

A Strong Voice for Labor and Unions!

Remember to vote November 4, 2014

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