

## To break into Portland residential market, an electricians union offers incentives

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 48 has launched a campaign to increase its presence in residential work. Known as the +5 Residential program, or Plus5PDX, it offers customers a service agreement that adds five years to the standard one-year warranty. The program also offers, free of charge: five low-voltage cable hookups, a \$250 credit the homebuyer can use for future electrical work, and a Legrand On-Q Enclosure, which is a central connection point for things like intercom, camera, and internet systems.

Plus5PDX is targeted at home builders or homeowners doing remodels or additions. It's expected to be something union contractors can use as a selling point when competing for new business.

Indiana IBEW Local 697 came up with the idea, which has also been taken up by IBEW Local 46 in Seattle. IBEW's international office is encouraging other locals to offer the program. Expenses are covered through the Electrical Industry Advancement Fund, which is administered jointly by the union and the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA).

Just 9 percent of residential electrical work in the Portland area is currently performed by union-signatory contractors, says Local 48 organizer Oscar Mérida, and most of that is in larger multi-family hous-



**At Portland's Fall Home and Garden Show Oct. 3, Oscar Mérida and Sue Harris of IBEW Local 48 debut a new incentive program for builders and homeowners to consider union contractors.**

ing construction. The Local 48 residential agreement, which includes a union scale of \$28.25 an hour plus \$11.85 an hour in benefits covers about 45 members of Local 48 who are on its residential list. Thirty-seven contractors are signed on to the agreement.

"With a lot of people, as soon as they hear union they assume it's going to be overpriced," Mérida told the Labor Press. "But there's a reason we get paid what we get paid. We train the best, and perform the

best work possible."

The Plus5PDX campaign debuted with a booth at the Portland Fall Home and Garden Show October 2-5. It will also be promoted with yard signs and window decals. So far, 11 contractors have signed up to take part. The campaign has a web site, [plus5pdx.org](http://plus5pdx.org), and a hotline, 1-844-plus5pdx, where a list of participating contractors is available.

## Doorknocking with Working America

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"I'm giving people an opportunity to participate."

At 4:30 p.m., a voter named Paul is home and answers the door. A Republican, he says he doesn't vote the party line, but considers candidates on their merits. "Schools and jobs," he answers, when Qolus asks what issues are most important to him. Qolus next names the candidates for state house and senate in his district, and asks if he knows which one he'll vote for. He favors Democrat Barton for House, but is thinking about voting for the Republican for Senate.

Qolus explains that Working America, a nonpartisan organization, has endorsed Barton and Damon, both Democrats. Damon is a professional mediator, and that may be just what the closely divided Senate needs to get any work done, Qolus says. Paul takes her flier, promises to consider it, and agrees to share his email address. She thanks him, and is on her way to the next door, making notes on her tablet about the encounter.

Next to answer the door is Lois,

an 83-year-old Republican who says national security is her top issue.

"What about issues for the state legislature?" Qolus asks.

Jobs and schools, Lois replies. She thinks schools could use more money.

Qolus delivers a rap about Barton: He helped get more money for schools this year.

The money will probably go to overpaid higher-ups, Lois says.

Actually, Qolus says, the Legislature told districts the extra money had to be used to reduce class size. In other words: Hire teachers. Barton also got the state to commit \$5 million to redevelop a closed-down paper mill nearby, Qolus adds, and required that any work done on the site be paid a living wage.

That sounds fine, Lois says ... if it ever gets built. Lois says she watches Fox News, and is fed up with all the political negativity.

"You haven't heard me say anything negative, have you?" Qolus asks. Qolus says she's met Barton. He's direct and honest and approachable.

Lois takes some literature and follows Qolus out to the street, adding that she doesn't like Obama, or Obamacare, or Clinton. Maybe they don't agree on some things, Qolus says. But Lois can tell Qolus believes in what she's doing.

"It's our impression that matters," Qolus tells the Labor Press afterward.

Qolus and her coworkers have been out helping candidates in close races since Aug. 25, talking to Democratic, Republican and independent voters.

For the state labor federation, it's an investment in people power. Gone are the days when an Oregon AFL-CIO endorsement meant a check to a candidate's coffers. Today, the labor federation wages its own election campaign, in which union volunteers and employees supplement a full-time field operation — staffed by Chellema Qolus and 24 other Working America canvassers.

## Oregon Treasurer Ted Wheeler proposes Ballot Measure 86

By JEFF KLATKE,  
Oregon AFSCME president

grow beyond the value of the original bond issuance.

Oregon Treasurer Ted Wheeler has come up with another good idea. His proposed Ballot Measure 86 would authorize a fund that would provide financial assistance to students pursuing career training, technical or professional education.

As the costs of education continue to rise, education beyond high school has become cost-prohibitive for many, limiting career paths of workers in nearly every field. Measure 86 gives students of all ages an opportunity to pursue that education that might otherwise be out of reach.

Measure 86 amends the Oregon Constitution to allow the state to issue bonds to create an endowment fund that remains in perpetuity. The interest earnings from this fund would be used to provide financial assistance to students at public colleges and universities in Oregon. The bonds that could be issued could only be a tiny fraction of the state's debt capacity, but could result in hundreds of millions of dollars for the endowment and tens of millions of dollars available every year for students.

The fund would also be eligible to accept charitable contributions and

There are universities that have created similar funds and use them to offer various forms of financial assistance like loans or grants or a combination of loans and grants. The final products that would be available in Oregon would be the decision of the Oregon Legislature. Measure 86 requires the creation of this fund and allows bonds to be issued to create it.

Why would this kind of financial assistance be a good investment in Oregon's work force? The growth in the Oregon economy and the Oregon job market is based on skills. The need for unskilled labor will always exist, but advancement in a trade, craft or profession is based on the acquisition of skills. These skills can be acquired both inside and outside the classroom. This fund gives people seeking accessible and affordable.

For these and other reasons, the Portland Tribune, the Salem Statesman-Journal, the Eugene Register-Guard, the Portland City Club, the American Federation of Teachers, the Oregon Education Association, the Oregon Nurses Association, Service Employees International Union Local 503, and Oregon AFSCME encourage you to vote yes on Ballot Measure 86.



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### Serious Injury and Death Cases

- Construction Injuries
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