

# National Labor News

## Machinists rack up win at Army arsenal in Texas

By a 509-329 margin, workers at the Red River Arsenal near Texarkana, Texas, voted Oct. 22 to join the Machinists Union. The new unit will represent 1,000 mechanics, technicians and maintenance workers at URS Federal Services, a contractor at the depot, the union said. The election was conducted by the National Labor Relations Board.

"Times are changing, and workers are tired of stagnant wages and benefits," said Machinists Southern Vice President Mark Blondin. "There's a growing trend among workers in Texas and throughout the South who believe it's time to stand up and time to get their fair share. The new members deserve credit for looking beyond the anti-union rhetoric and focusing on the opportunities that only collective bargaining can provide."

Earlier in 2014, the Machinists Union won a vote among 925 helicopter mechanics at the Corpus Christi, Texas, Army Depot.

## Drivers strike in protest at Uber

Uber, the online taxi startup backed by Goldman Sachs, likes to call itself a "disruptor" of the traditionally regulated taxi business. On Oct. 22, it faced some disruption of its own, as Uber drivers in five cities turned off the Uber smartphone app for a three-hour "virtual" strike. The strike was called to protest draconian work rules and unilateral decision by Uber to lower fares to increase the company's market share.

## First union toehold at FedEx

Workers at a FedEx Freight facility in Philadelphia have voted 28-16 in favor of representation by the Teamsters. If they succeed in getting a contract, they'll be the first unionized unit at the company. Teamsters represent more than 260,000 employees at competitor UPS.

## End of the line for the storied mine workers union chronicled in Salt of the Earth

Workers at Chino Mine in New Mexico voted 236 to 83 on Sept. 18 to decertify their union, International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Local 890. Local 890 was immortalized by the 1954 movie Salt of the Earth, based on a 15-month strike against the Empire Zinc Mine, in which Mexican-American miners struck to attain wage parity with Anglo workers and to be treated with dignity by the bosses. Made by blacklisted filmmakers with financing from the union, the film was cast with men and women who participated in the strike, and starred Juan Chacón, then president of the local. Now the mine is owned by Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold Inc, the Mine-Mill Workers is a part of United Steelworkers of America, and workers at the open-pit copper mine will be nonunion for the first time in 72 years.

## Seattle isn't enforcing sick-leave rules, report says

"Pretty please, with sugar on top" isn't going to make Seattle employers comply with the city's sick leave ordinance, a recent Seattle city audit concluded. Between Sept. 1, 2012, and Dec. 31, 2013, the City of Seattle received 143 complaints that employers weren't complying with the new ordinance. The City sent letters to those employers, but didn't conduct investigations or levy fines, the audit found. That might be because the city has had just one full-time analyst working on sick-time compliance. For 2015, Seattle Mayor Ed Murray is requesting funding for seven full-time positions. They'll need to do more than write letters: Seattle must crack down on the scofflaw employers if it wants to ensure that workers get paid sick time, auditors said.

## Obama Administration backs Amazon, not workers, in Supreme Court case

After an exhausting 12-hour shift, Amazon.com warehouse workers clock out, then wait in line 25 minutes to have their bags checked by security officers to make sure they haven't stolen anything. Amazon could hire more security to speed it up, but it doesn't. The bag checks are mandatory, but workers aren't paid for them. And that violates federal labor law, argue former warehouse temps Jesse Busk and Laurie Castro in a lawsuit that went all the way to the Supreme Court. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals agreed with Busk, saying the workers should be paid for their time. But Obama Administration lawyers argued in a legal brief that the security checks aren't "integral and indispensable" to their job, so they shouldn't be paid for them. The Supreme Court heard oral arguments Oct. 8 and could make a decision any time.

# ...ATU ratifies 4-year deal at TriMet

(From Page 1)

family size and which plan is chosen. Retiree premiums are higher. Part-time bus operators receive the same health insurance benefit as full-time employees.

The agreement also restores TriMet contributions to funds that benefit members: a Recreational Trust Fund that pays for an annual picnic; an Employee Assistance Fund that helps workers with substance abuse or psy-

## ...Home Forward first local body to OK \$15-an-hour minimum wage

(From Page 1)

poration that administers public housing and Section 8 programs locally.

At Buonoacore's instigation, a new memorandum of agreement adds to the existing union contracts a wage guarantee of at least \$15 an hour effective Dec. 1, 2014. That means hourly raises of 31 cents to \$4 for the 33 least-paid Home Forward workers, including maintenance workers, office assistants, resident specialists and program interns — about 10 of AFSCME Local 3135's 150 members, and about 20 of the Laborers' 36 members.

In an email announcing the agreement, Buonoacore said the additional cost of \$76,000 a year will be absorbed within Home Forward's administrative budget without any impact to the agency's programs.

Home Forward Local 3135 president Elyse Alexander said union members earlier this year argued for \$15 at a meeting of the Home Forward board, pointing out that some employees are paid so little they can sign up for subsidized housing under the same program they administer.

"For people jumping from \$12.55 to \$15, that's a life-changing wage increase," said Oregon AFSCME Council 75 President Jeff Klatke in a press statement. Klatke is an accountant at Home Forward. "We hope to lead by example, and are optimistic other local government agencies will follow suit."

At press time, management negotiators for Multnomah County were considering a \$15 an hour minimum wage contract proposal from AFSCME Local 88. If implemented, it would bring up wages for 160 county workers.

Earlier this year, Laborers Local 483 pushed for a \$15 minimum that would have affected 330 workers at the Oregon Zoo, but the Metro regional government rejected that proposal.

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chological issues; and a Child/Elder Care Fund that pays for daycare or home care for family members. TriMet will contribute \$55,000 a year to each of the funds.

The new contract incorporates the hours-of-service policy the two sides negotiated after TriMet faced bad publicity over sleep-deprived drivers: The transit agency now requires at least nine hours between the end of one shift and the beginning of another.

The agreement also:

- Allows TriMet's maintenance department to hire up to five journey-level workers per year from outside the district, and up to half the new apprentices in each apprentice program;
- Simplifies the grievance process by eliminating two steps; and
- Scraps the dysfunctional Joint Labor-Management Committee; instead

the two sides can meet as needed.

A side accord to the agreement settles seven legal disputes that were pending before the state Employment Relations Board or in the courts. As part of that settlement, TriMet will reimburse members just under \$3.7 million for premium costs they paid in 2011 and 2012, \$500,000 for out-of-pocket medical costs in 2011, and \$425,000 for premium costs in 2013 and 2014.

During discussion before the TriMet Board voted unanimously to approve the contract, board member Joe Esmonde, who's also political director at IBEW Local 48, called it a fair contract for all concerned.

The new four-year agreement takes effect immediately. It is retroactive to Dec. 1, 2012, and runs through Nov. 30, 2016.

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