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## THE YEAR IN OREGON LABOR: Highlights and Top Stories of 2014

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*Some years will live forever in glorious memory. But for organized labor in Oregon, 2014 was not one of them. Here is a look back over 12 months of labor stories we reported.*

### ORGANIZING

There wasn't much union organizing in Oregon in 2014, at least as reflected in workplace unionization elections. According to our count, just 678 workers in 23 workplaces joined unions: 476 workers in 12 private-sector workplaces, and 202 workers in 11 public-sector workplaces. That's in a state with 1.7 million workers that added over 40,000 new jobs over the course of the year.

The two biggest union organizing gains were the 172 Portland airport food service workers who joined UNITE HERE under a nationally-negotiated card-check union neutrality agreement with contractor HMS Host, and the 45 workers at Douglas County public health department who joined AFSCME using Oregon's card-check law. The biggest union election loss was Metro Metals Northwest, where a group of 69 workers voted not to join the Teamsters. On the bright side, only one union workplace voted to go nonunion — a three-employee lottery deli in Wilsonville.

### COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Over the course of the year, most large contracts we reported on either treaded water or made concessions.

The year began with one of the biggest union contract concessions ever made, to one of the world's most profitable companies: On Jan. 3, an eight-year contract extension was ratified that will eliminate the pension, increase out-of-pocket health insurance payments, and limit future wage growth for 32,000 Boeing Machinists in Washington, Oregon, and Kansas. The workers got a \$10,000 ratification bonus, another \$5,000 bonus in 2020, and additional dental benefits of \$500 per person. The extension (to a contract that wasn't due to expire until September 2016) came shortly after Washington lawmakers gave Boeing \$8.7 billion in tax concessions, the largest corporate tax subsidy in the history of the United States. In the wake of the vote, Fox and Friends' conservative TV host Steve Doocy called the contract a victory against organized labor, and Boeing stock reached a new all-time high on the New York Stock Exchange.

In the public sector, Oregon union workers agreed to contracts that mostly kept up with inflation. [Inflation has ranged from 1.5 to 2.0 percent the last few years.]

- 2,900 teachers at **Portland Public Schools** got annual raises of 2.3 percent, a promise to hire 150 teachers, and two days added to the school year, in a deal reached two days before a scheduled strike. Teachers are members of the Portland Association of Teachers/Oregon Education Association (OEA).
- 2,900 workers at **Multnomah County** will keep pace with

inflation in a new three-year contract with AFSCME Local 88 that also contains a phased-in \$15-an-hour wage floor for the least-paid workers.

- 2,000 members of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757 at **TriMet** will have somewhat reduced health care benefits in a new contract that included 3 percent pay raises Dec. 1, 2014 and Dec. 1, 2015.

- 1,600 workers at the **City of Portland** got raises of 0.9 percent the first year, and matching inflation after that, in a new four-year union contract with seven-union member District Council of Trade Unions.

- 1,400 members of **University of Oregon** Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation (American Federation of Teachers Local 3544) won raises of 5 percent a year, plus a \$150,000-a-year hardship fund (in response to a proposal for two weeks guaranteed paid sick/parental leave) after striking for eight days with no loss of wages.

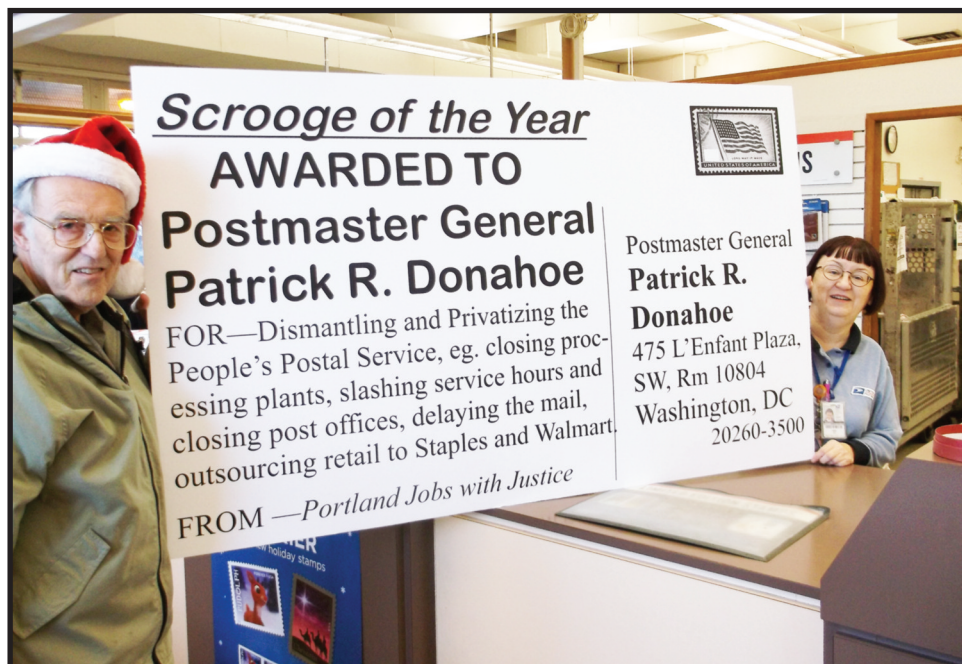
- 950 full-time faculty at **Portland State University** got raises of 1.5, 2.5, and 2.5 percent, a new salary floor of \$40,000, and modest improvements in job security, in a new contract with American Association of University Professors.

- 500 OEA teachers in **Medford School District** got annual raises of 1.9, 2.5 and 3 percent, after going on strike for 16 days.

- At **Metro**, a new three-year contract for 300 members of AFSCME Local 3580 increases the employee share of the health insurance premium to 8 from 6 percent, and gives a 2.8 percent

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## Postmaster General named 'Scrooge of the Year' by JwJ



A huge postcard, announcing his "Scrooge of the Year Award" was mailed Dec. 22 to Postmaster General Patrick R. Donahoe. The award is given every Christmas to the worst boss by a vote of attendees at the Portland Jobs with Justice holiday fundraising party. The award accuses Donahoe of "dismantling and privatizing the people's postal service, eg. closing processing plants, slashing service hours and closing post offices, delaying the mail, outsourcing retail to Staples and Walmart."

USPS will lower "service standards" on Jan. 5 to virtually eliminate overnight mail delivery — including first-class mail from one address to another within the same city or town. All letters, periodicals and packages throughout the country will be delayed. Eighty-two mail processing plants — half of those remaining — will be closed during 2015, including those in Springfield, Pendleton, and Bend, Oregon.

Postal management says the closures are necessary because the USPS, which isn't funded by taxpayers, is losing money. Critics claim that a 2006

Congressional mandate, which forces the U.S. Postal Service to prefund retiree health benefits 75 years in advance, has created a phony financial crisis. Although the USPS has claimed a "loss" every year since 2006, due primarily to the pre-fund mandate, the postal service has not made an actual payment toward prefunding since 2011. The USPS has generated an operating profit for the last six quarters. USPS is a semi-independent agency that relies on postage — not tax dollars — for revenue.

In the photo at left, Rev. John Schwiebert, decked out in a Santa hat, hands the three-by-five foot postcard across the counter to postal clerks at Portland's Martin Luther King Jr. Post Office, while a holiday crowd of approving customers snapped photos as they waited in a line that stretched out into the street.

Donahoe announced in November that he was retiring effective Feb. 1. The U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors appointed Megan J. Brennan, the current chief operating officer of the Postal Service, as the 74th Postmaster General and CEO.