



# NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

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VOLUME 116, NUMBER 6

PORTLAND, OREGON

MARCH 20, 2015



## Labor ramps up fight against free trade deal

Union leaders and rank-and-file supporters have in recent weeks ramped up pressure on members of Congress to vote no on “fast track.” Fast track is a Congressional agreement that would make it easier for Congress to pass NAFTA-style international agreements like the secretive Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) — a deal being negotiated behind closed doors by representatives of 12 Pacific Rim nations.

On March 11, the national AFL-CIO announced that unions are freezing all political contributions to federal candidates until further notice in order to conserve resources for the historic legislative battle around fast track and the debate over the TPP. Defeat of fast track has been declared a top federation priority.

“Fast track has been used since the Nixon Administration to advance deals, like NAFTA, that are sold to the American

people as job creation measures,” said a March 2 letter to Congress signed by more than 60 national labor officials. “But these deals, written largely by and for the world’s largest corporations, don’t create jobs: their main purpose isn’t even related to trade; it’s to enshrine rules that make it easier for firms to invest offshore and increase corporate influence over the global economy.”

On March 4, union leaders from more than 20 states gathered in Washington, D.C., to lobby members of Congress. And they’re putting the pressure on back home too. A labor-led March 9 protest moved into the streets of downtown Portland. U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Oregon), was met by fast track opponents all around Oregon in a week of town hall meetings, and was trailed by a 30-foot protest

As a national campaign against new NAFTA-style trade deals picked up steam, the Oregon AFL-CIO led protesters into the streets of Portland with a March 9 Rally and March to Push Back Fast Track. Fast track is an agreement by Congress to give rush treatment to any trade agreement negotiated by the president. The rally, at downtown Portland’s Director Park, drew about 150 supporters, including Portland City Council member Steve Novick.

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## Airlines threaten to sue over modest labor reforms at PDX

Port of Portland proposal would require \$13 total hourly compensation in future airport service contracts

By Don McIntosh  
Associate Editor

The Port of Portland has beefed up a soon-to-be voted on proposal to improve worker conditions at the Portland International Airport (PDX) — so much that a national airline group is threatening to sue.

UNITE HERE and Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which represent low-wage airport service workers, have been campaigning to get the Port of Portland Commission to pass pro-worker policies similar to those at several other West Coast airports. And as reported in the Feb. 20 issue of the

Northwest Labor Press, the first draft of the management-written policy looked pretty unpromising, full of vague pledges and complicated, unenforceable employer mandates.

But a second draft, presented at the March 11 meeting of the Commission, added notable specifics: Going forward, new airport service and concession contracts would require employers to provide wages and benefits totaling at least \$13 an hour. And when contracts change hands in the future, incoming companies with more than 50 PDX employees would have to hire the employees of the outgoing contractor. Such a “worker retention” policy would give airport workers greater job security. The Port would also maintain a list of laid-off airport service workers. Smaller con-

tractors would have to consider hiring from the list before hiring outside workers.

The proposed policy would apply to food and retail outlets in the airport, and to “certain airline subcontracted service providers as determined by Port staff.”

That last part elicited a March 9 threat letter from Airlines For America (A4A), an industry trade association that represents the interests of its 11 member companies: Alaska, American, Atlas Air, Delta, Hawaiian, jet-Blue, Southwest, United, US Airways, FedEx and UPS.

A4A sent Rob DeLucia, its vice president for labor and employment, to make sure Port leaders got the message.

“We are here largely to avoid litigation with you,” DeLucia told commissioners at their

March 11 meeting. “We have sued Los Angeles and Seattle in the federal courts over what they’ve done. We started to do so in Alabama, but the airport there pulled back from what they were considering.”

DeLucia also warned of unintended consequences: If costs go up, airlines might have to cut service to out-of-the-way areas of the state.

“Service providers are key to our operations,” DeLucia said.

DeLucia didn’t put it this way, but basically the issue is this: Airlines have eliminated unionized workers in the last 30 years, instead outsourcing everything they could to low-wage nonunion contractors: from baggage handling and cabin cleaning to jet fueling and customer service. If public bod-

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## Right to work initiatives filed in Oregon

SALEM — Anti-union forces are campaigning across the United States to pass so-called “right-to-work” laws, which deplete union resources and divide union-represented workers.

On March 9, Republican Gov. Scott Walker signed legislation making Wisconsin the 25th “right-to-work” state. The law was passed in a rush-job special legislative session that Walker convened only days before.

The very next day, two prospective ballot measures were filed in Oregon — aimed at the November 2016 ballot — to make Oregon a right-to-work state for public employees.

In Vancouver, Washington, the

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