

NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

(International Standard Serial Number 0894-444X)

Established in 1900 in Portland, Oregon as a voice of the labor movement. Published on a semi-monthly basis on the first and third Fridays of each month by the Oregon Labor Press Publishing Co. Inc., a non-profit mutual benefit corporation owned by 20 unions and councils including the Oregon AFL-CIO. Serving more than 120 union organizations in Oregon and Southwest Washington.

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Printed on recycled paper, using soy-based inks, by members of Teamsters Local 747-M.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Individual subscriptions are \$13.75 per year for union members, \$20 a year for all others. Send a check for that amount, indicating mailing address and union affiliation, to P.O. Box 13150, Portland, OR 97213. **For 25 or more subscriptions, group rates of \$9.60 a year per person are available to trade union organizations.** Call 503-288-3311 for details.

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PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID AT PORTLAND, OREGON.

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AFSCME wins big gains for Metro temp workers

An agreement between the Metro regional government and AFSCME Local 3580 will deliver raises of up to \$3.92 an hour to about 50 newly unionized workers at the Metro waste transfer station and Oregon Zoo who are classified as temps.

In contract bargaining last year for a larger group of 300 Metro employees, Local 3580 complained that Metro was undermining standards for full-time permanent workers by employing lower-paid “perma-temps” — workers who were classified as temporary but stayed on for years. But Metro declined in the negotiations to make any progress on the issue. So starting last summer, the union signed up the temps to join AFSCME using the state’s card check process. At that point, Metro agreed to bargain over terms and conditions for the temps, and on March 10, after three months of bargaining, the two sides reached an agreement that brings temp wages up to or close to the wages of permanent workers doing the same work.

The agreement means Zoo workers who handle animals for the public will get raises of 55 cents — to \$16.01 an hour, the same as their permanent coun-



terparts. Meanwhile, wages will raise from \$13.58 to \$17.50 for hazardous waste workers, and from \$12 to \$15.75 for Zoo security officers. The raises are effective April 1, and will rise again in July 2015 and 2016 based on inflation. The workers will also get an allowance for safety gear and boots, and the right to earn up to 26 hours of

sick leave per year. “Issues remain with temporary work,” said AFSCME staff representative Ross Grami. “But this is a great first step. We’re glad Metro took it with us.”

Grami gave credit to Metro leaders for the agreement, as well as to leaders of the groups Portland Jobs with Justice and 15 Now, who attended the final

bargaining session. The agreement was reached March 10, two days before a planned rally, so instead of protesting, unionists turned out to thank Metro leaders. The agreement runs through June 30, 2017, at which point the next general contract with Metro will cover the temps as well.

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