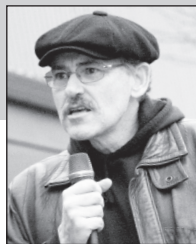


## Who's on our side?

By Tom Chamberlain Oregon AFL-CIO President



### Trade deals that work for workers

For decades, Americans have been told that free trade is a wonderful thing that benefits everyone. Politicians have promised us that if other countries simply lower their tariffs, our products will be more affordable, our customer base will grow, and everybody will win.

But what does it mean when a country “wins?” If employers take advantage of investment protections and move their offices overseas, Oregon workers aren’t winning. If other employers use trade deals to undermine American environmental and labor standards, Oregon workers aren’t winning.

For decades, the benefits of trade deals haven’t trickled down to working families. They’ve been captured almost entirely by global corporations and their executives. These companies have taken advantage of our bad trade policy to shift their supply chains from one country to the next to find the lowest wages and weakest regulations possible. In the process, they’ve laid off workers, suppressed wages, and devastated communities.

In an era of record income inequality, we need new rules for trade. We need rules that raise wages for working people. But that isn’t likely to happen anytime soon.

As I write this, our country is negotiating the biggest trade agreement ever: the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). The TPP would cover the U.S. and 11 other Pacific Rim countries (Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam). The Obama Administration and the U.S. trade representative have said it’s the most progressive trade deal in history. Well, that’s like saying it’s more nutritious than sugar; it doesn’t mean much.

If a trade deal is actually going to benefit Oregon businesses and their workers by boosting exports and creating good-paying jobs, it will need to look very different than NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and every other trade agreement in existence. But it’s instead on track to benefit

multinational corporations whose lobbyists have been given special seats at the table while the rest of us get thrown under the bus. Under NAFTA, Oregonians lost a net 8,700 jobs. Promising TPP will be different doesn’t make it so.

To ensure a bad trade deals’ chances of success, the Obama Administration is lobbying Oregon’s representatives in Congress to support Trade Promotion Authority, also known as fast track. Fast Track is a legislative procedure that would force Congress to cede its constitutional authority over trade policy. It wouldn’t let our elected representatives offer amendments to improve any provision that’s bad for the environment, food safety or working people. Instead, within 90 days, Congress would be forced to give the TPP a simple up or down vote. You can bet corporations will be loudly weighing in during those 90 days. After all, they have a lot of money at stake.

To get Congress behind the proposal, the Administration and Senate Republicans are leaning hard on Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Oregon). Sen. Wyden is the ranking member of the Finance Committee, which puts him in a position to stand up for increased transparency and accountability in trade negotiations, which will lead to better trade rules or throw it all away by signing onto another old-style fast track bill. Sen. Wyden hasn’t signed on to support fast track yet. While he makes up his mind, Oregonians need to urge him to stand against secrecy and for trade deals that work for working people.

Join me and call Sen. Wyden’s office and ask him to reject fast track. Tell him we need a trade deal that raises American living standards, not one that accelerates a race to the bottom.

Tom Chamberlain is president of the Oregon AFL-CIO, a 120,000-member-strong federation of labor unions.

## ...Airline coalition threatens to sue PDX

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ies like port commissions try to raise wages or otherwise interfere with that profitable business model, they’ll see the airlines in court.

“We don’t want to be sued,” Commission president Jim Carter replied to DeLucia. “On the other hand, we don’t want to be cowed into not doing anything we think it’s appropriate to do.”

“It’s sort of what we’re used to hearing,” Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain, a member of the Port Board of

Commissioners, told the Labor Press. “Pass paid sick leave; you’re going to get sued. Raise wages, and you’re going to get sued.”

Besides the legal threat from A4A, commissioners also heard push-back from a representative of the Airline Service Providers Association, from Capers Cafe co-owners Christian and Annette Joly, and from Edward Gerdes, general counsel for the Cafe Yumm chain of virtuous restaurants.

Cafe Yumm is a new kind of business, Gerdes told commissioners, legally committed to the

“triple bottom line” of people, planet and profit. It already provides compensation at or above the Port’s proposed \$13 an hour threshold, Gerdes said. And yet, Cafe Yumm would not have signed an airport concessions contract if the pro-worker policy had been in place, because of the “administrative cost overlay” of complying. Gerdes did not return a call from the Labor Press seeking more detail about that burden.

Commissioners are expected to vote on a final draft in April or May.

## ...Oppose fast track

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blimp in Umatilla, La Grande, Baker City and Ontario.

“Ron Wyden: It’s up to you. Don’t betray us” said a large sign on the blimp, which was set up by the Internet freedom group Fight for the Future.

Wyden’s role is pivotal in the fast track debate, because he’s the top Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, and his support is considered necessary to pass fast track. But Wyden hasn’t yet reached agreement with Finance Committee chair Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) on the details of the fast track proposal. Wyden wants Congress to be able to reject fast track treatment for any agreement that doesn’t meet the goals it sets for such agreements, something Hatch disagrees with.

The TPP is opposed not just by labor but by environmental groups, consumer groups and Internet freedom activists. And the TPP negotiators themselves faced protests at their most recent meeting March 9-16 at Waikoloa Beach Marriott Resort in Hawaii, organized by MoveOn, Public Citizen, and other groups.

The Oregon AFL-CIO is calling on union members to join the fight by texting the word “FAIR” to 77948, for updates.

The labor federation is also asking union members to call their members of Congress to say that Oregon can’t afford another bad trade deal.

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley and Congressman Peter DeFazio are committed opponents of fast track and the TPP. But other Oregon members of Congress haven’t made it clear where they stand, and Wyden in particular is crucial.

“Until I hear them make a public statement against it, we have to assume they might vote for it,” said Oregon Fair Trade Coalition director Elizabeth Swager. “Their constituents have to contact them and urge them to publicly oppose it, because jobs, the environment, health, food safety, everything is on the line.”

**Sen. Ron Wyden:**  
1-866-502-6055

**Rep. Suzanne Bonamici:**  
202-225-0855

**Rep. Greg Walden:**  
202-225-6730

**Rep. Earl Blumenauer:**  
202-225-4811

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