

...Organizing is front and center

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working people's lives better and more fair. Whether it's getting a pathway to citizenship and eliminating a broken immigration system that hurts people and drives your wages down, or eliminating mass incarceration so that a whole generation of black men don't get disenfranchised from society, or eliminating pay discrepancy, so that women get paid a dollar for a man's dollar, rather than 78 cents. We're all about lifting up the lives of working people, and the best and the most enduring way to do that is with collective bargaining and with a contract on the job. Organizing is the lifeblood of unionism. Collective bargaining built the middle class.

But inequality is surging in America today. It doesn't have to be that way. We don't have to be an economy, a country, that does real well for the top couple percent but the rest of us get left behind. We don't have to be a country where racism can pre-

vent people from getting opportunities, or any other ism that stops people from getting more of the American Dream. We know we can have a more just society, an economy of rising wages and shared prosperity, not just for a few of us, but for all of us. Together, we're going to turn America right-side up. We'll start shrinking the gap between the rich and the rest of us. We'll bring justice to America's tax system. And we'll end the era of corporate trade deals like TPP (the Trans-Pacific Partnership).

Think about this: The real wages of 90 percent of working people have been falling for almost 40 years, while corporate profits keep rising. They're at record levels. It's time for us to get a raise. It's going to take unity. We're going to rise together, because if we don't rise together, none of us will actually rise. It's like Whac-A-Mole: If they see one group of workers rise up, they'll want to whack them. What do you think the assault on public employees is all about? First they came after pri-

vate sector employees, industrial workers, whacking us — closing plants, taking pensions, taking health care, lowering your wages. And then they came after the public employees. They came after the building trades. And they came after the maritimes. Everybody will get your turn in the barrel if we don't stick together. We have to have to lift all of us up if any of us are going to get very high.

Right now, brave workers at Target and Walmart are organizing without even the protection of a union on the job. And these workers, more than 2 million, have won raises this year, because they demanded a raise and we supported them. Money in the pocket of workers; that's what we stand for.

Working people need relief. We need it now: Raising wages, shared prosperity. We'll march for it. We'll organize for it. We'll picket for it. We'll vote for it. We'll fight for it. And we will win for it, because of your efforts. Let's go back and kick some ass for the working class."

OPEN FORUM

Vietnam vet objects to TPP trade deal

To The Editor:

I'm a Vietnam veteran who objects to the Republic of Vietnam being afforded trade equality with our country through the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement.

I am distressed that our politicians care so little about the ultimate sacrifice paid by so many Americans in the attempt to secure liberty and democracy for the people of Vietnam that they would enter into this treaty to victimize the citizens of that country, just so some transnational corporate executives can make more money than they will ever be able to spend in their lives.

Corporations currently operating in Vietnam are operating as criminal enterprises using slave and prison labor, and those workers who are paid, suffer at sub-human wages with no environmental or wage protections.

These corporations are funding the regime's oppression of the people, and the creation of chemical dumps and polluted waterways that the regime ignores at the peril of death and disease for local inhabitants.

They have continued these practices with impunity, while "negotiating" with "our" corporate lawyers for inclusion in the "treaty."

We are expected to compete with these conditions? There is no compelling reason to lower our standards to compete with criminals oppressing their people!

By the way, 58,000 Americans that U.S. politicians sent to that country were killed. I flew with about 30 of them who died in the back of my helicopter, so I take this personally.

Now, all these politicians who talk often about "honoring our heroes" care nothing for either as they do the bidding for their really rich patrons—no matter the cost to "We the People" or the sovereignty of our constitutional democracy.

The shame of it all is that they're selling us veterans out so cheaply. They think they're such big shots, while we actually have homeless schoolchildren and homeless vets in this country, which only shows these politicians don't know what they're doing.

One thing for sure, if you join the military nowadays you are a fool—unless you're happy to die for a corporation!

I'm sorry for that, but my dad was a World War II veteran and he'd feel the same way.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Northwest Labor Press welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should be 300 words or less and should include contact info as well as which union you belong to. Send to editor@nwlaborpress.org or Attn: Editor; PO Box 13150; Portland, OR 97213.



Letter Carrier Pamela Durley with volunteer Doug Phillips at Creston Post Office.

Letter Carriers deliver more than the mail

More than 4,000 letter carriers in urban and rural areas of Oregon and Southwest Washington delivered 1.2 million pounds of food to the Oregon Food Bank on May 9—part of the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive.

Wrapping up its 23rd year, the food drive is held on the second Saturday in May in 10,000 cities and towns in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Guam. On that day, postal customers are asked to leave bags of non-perishable food next to their mailboxes for letter carriers to pick up. The bags are then dropped off at post offices, where volunteers sort through the food and load it into shipping containers. From there, the food is taken to the Oregon Food Bank for distribution.

The amount of food collected nationally was not available at press time, but typically it's around 70 to 75 million pounds.



Donated food stays in the community where it was collected.

The Oregon Food Bank collects and distributes food through a network of four Oregon Food Bank branches and 17 independent regional food banks serving Oregon and Clark County. The Food Bank network helps nearly 1 in 5 households fend off hunger. Oregon Food Bank also leads statewide efforts to increase resources for hungry families and to eliminate the root causes of hunger through advocacy, nutrition education, garden education, and helping communities strengthen local food systems.

For more information, go to oregonfoodbank.org.

Caregivers at Sacred Heart in Springfield unionize

SPRINGFIELD—Frontline care providers at PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Centers—Riverbend and University District—voted 524-367 May 29 to be represented by Service Employees International Union Local 49. It is the largest healthcare election to take place in Oregon for nearly two decades.

The bargaining unit consists of 1,100 certified nursing assis-

tants, emergency room techs, monitor techs, housekeepers, food service assistants, patient access representatives, surgical support aides and others.

Issues in the campaign included chronic short-staffing, affordable healthcare, fair wages, and respect on the job.

Nurses at the hospital are represented by Oregon Nurses Association, and doctors are mem-

bers of Pacific Northwest Hospital Medicine Association.

Sacred Heart is part of Vancouver, Wash.-based PeaceHealth, a not-for-profit health care system with medical centers in Oregon, Washington and Alaska. The company is in the midst of a massive shakeup in its executive ranks, with five top officers leaving.