NATIONAL

At Walmart, charity really really starts at home

D.C. Jobs with Justice and a dozen other labor and community groups filed a complaint with the IRS June 15 — accusing Walmart of inappropriately using its nonprofit Walmart Foundation to soften up local opposition to the company's efforts to expand. The Walmart Foundation, which is completely controlled by the company, has had a habit of ramping up local giving just before local votes on whether to approve new stores. For example, the foundation donated just over $200,000 to Los Angeles organizations in 2008 and 2009, increased that to $1.4 million in 2011, just as plans to open a store were getting underway, and then dropped back to about $230,000 in 2013, the year that store opened. Such a practice violates the terms of the foundation's tax-exempt status, the complaint argues, because it shows that the charitable donations are directly benefiting the donor's business.

$15 minimum passes in LA, and will go to Tacoma voters

Los Angeles became the latest —and largest—U.S. city to raise its minimum wage June 13, when mayor Eric Garcetti signed a bill for a local minimum wage that will rise in steps to $15 by 2020.

And on June 6, the group 15 Now qualified a ballot measure that will ask Tacoma, Washington, voters this November to approve a $15 an hour minimum, for businesses with annual gross revenues of over $300,000. Tacoma City Council is working on a counterproposal to refer to voters.

Sanders finds labor backing for his campaign for president

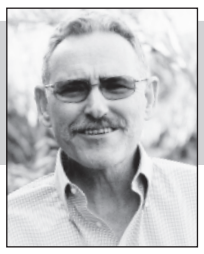
The first candidate to earn labor support for the 2016 presidential race is … Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont. On June 15, the North Carolina AFL-CIO passed a resolution urging support for Sanders' campaign, citing his longstanding and heartfelt commitment to union principles and labor's values, and policy proposals that put the interests of the labor movement front and center. The resolution comes after similar resolutions from the Vermont AFL-CIO and the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America.

FedEx drivers are employees after all, in California anyway

FedEx Ground announced June 12 that it will pay $228 million to settle a lawsuit claiming that it illegally misclassified over 2,000 FedEx Ground and FedEx Home Delivery pickup and delivery drivers as "independent contractors" when they were in reality employees. The company has been sued numerous times for the practice, which is meant to skirt payroll taxes and the law giving workers the right to unionize.

Who's on our side?

By Tom Chamberlain Oregon AFL-CIO President



Free trade — a litmus test for labor

After 20 years of NAFTA, CAFTA and a host of other free trade agreements, none of which have fulfilled their promise of new jobs, the data shows that American workers have paid for free trade with lower wages and cuts to benefits. America has lost millions of good-paying, middle class jobs.

The American labor movement, spearheaded by AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, has been very clear about our position on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and Fast Track. We will not support any trade agreement that costs jobs, undermines the sovereignty of our nation, and ignores labor and environmental standards.

Our answer from President Obama is to trust him. But the little we know about the TPP does nothing to convince us that it will be any different than the previous free trade agreements.

The labor movement has been united—and we have been clear with Congress: Trade Promotion Authority, also known as Fast Track, forces an up or down vote on the TPP. Organized labor will hold those who side with corporate America accountable. The TPP is potentially the largest free trade agreement in history, representing 40 percent of the world's economy. It will be the last trade agreement to allow nations to simply sign on.

On June 4, Roll Call magazine ran an article titled "Democrats Frustrated by Unions' Cash Freeze over Fast Track." The article speaks to how upset some members of Congress are that organized labor will not make political contributions until after the vote on Fast Track and the TPP, and evaluating whether to find more worker-oriented candidates to challenge supporters of corporate-driven free trade agreements.

What is upsetting about the article is the backlash the labor movement is receiving from those members of the Democratic House Caucus, who labor is holding accountable for their support of Fast Track and the TPP. They're even going so far as referring to President Trumka as a "bully."

I wonder if the named and unnamed members of the U.S. House of Representatives Democratic Caucus members who spoke out in the article understand that their vote for Fast Track and for the Trans-Pacific Partnership is the biggest labor vote of their careers. Taking issue with how unions hold Congressional Democrats accountable defines the growing fissure between workers and some politicians. This appears to be based on a belief that unions have no place to go but the Democratic Party. In reality, we do have a place to go: It's to sit out elections or to find better candidates who understand that workers need help.

The endorsement of any labor organization, including the Oregon AFL-CIO, is earned through voting records, candidate questionnaires, and how candidates actively support workers. Do they support cuts to social programs such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid to balance the federal budget? Or do they ensure that business and the one-percenters pay their fair share? Do they go to union events and glad-hand? Or do they walk the picket line and send letters to CEOs in support of workers?

Labor's endorsements and political contributions aren't a right. They're an honor.

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

...Fast Track runs off rails

From Page 1

of all of this discussion that we could find a path to yes for the Fast Track legislation," Pelosi said. "Some bumps in the road along the way … unfortunately, I think, sinkholes as well. But that doesn't mean that that road cannot be repaired. I just believe that it must be lengthened."

Pelosi seemed to suggest in her House floor speech that Fast Track should come after Congress deals with more urgent matters, like climate change and highway fund reauthorization.

How the Oregon/Southwest Washington delegation voted

Democrat Peter DeFazio was the only Oregon House member to vote against the Fast Track and TAA bills. His fellow Democrats Earl Blumenauer, Suzanne Bonamici, and Kurt Schrader, and Republican Greg Walden, all voted for the Fast Track and TAA bills, as did Southwest Washington Republican Jaime Herrera-Beutler. [In the earlier Senate vote, Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) voted against the Fast Track/TAA bill, but Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) and Patty Murray (D-Wash.) voted for it.]

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