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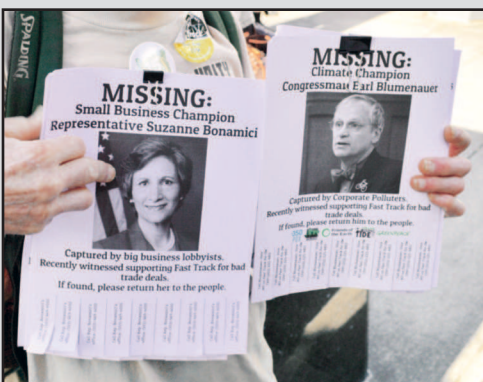
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PERSONA NON GRATA

CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORTERS OF FAST TRACK will not be invited to attend or speak at this year's big Labor Day picnic at Oaks Park. On June 22, delegates to the Northwest Oregon Labor Council — which sponsors the picnic — voted to withhold invitations to those who voted for fast tracking free trade agreements. That includes U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, and U.S. Reps. Earl Blumenauer, Suzanne Bonamici, and Kurt Schrader — all Democrats.

Fast-tracking trade deals signed into law

By Don McIntosh
Associate Editor

A week after unions celebrated a setback for Fast Track (also known as Trade Promotion Authority), the seeming victory came unzipped in a series of parliamentary maneuvers. Fast Track is a bill that makes it easier for NAFTA-style deals—like the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership—to pass Congress.

Democrats in Congress generally oppose the NAFTA-style deals, while Republicans overwhelmingly support them. The deals give special rights to corporate investors, and are strongly opposed by labor and environmental groups. Eleven NAFTA-style agreements have been approved so far, and they are believed to have accelerated the offshoring of U.S. jobs.

When the deals have passed, it's usually because a minority of Democrats joined the majority

of Republicans in voting for it.

This year, to provide political cover for 14 Senate Democrats who wanted to vote for Fast Track, the Senate combined it with a vote to reauthorize Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), a program that pays to retrain and relocate workers who lose their jobs because of foreign trade. The combined bill passed 62-37 on May 22.

In the House, the Republican leadership scheduled separate votes June 12 on the two items. Republicans tend to oppose Trade Adjustment Assistance, so Republican leaders counted on Democratic votes to pass it. Instead, Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi led Democrats to vote against the Trade Adjustment Assistance bill—to prevent passage of the package as a whole (House and Senate versions of a bill have to match in order to be-

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Shirley Block wins top office at Amalgamated Transit Union

TriMet road supervisor Shirley Block was elected president of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 757 June 23, defeating incumbent Bruce Hansen and two other challengers, Henry Beasley and Cris Orlando. In mail ballots counted by the union election committee, Block received 1,156 votes (48 percent) to 849 votes for Hansen (36 percent), 324 for Beasley (14 percent) and 58 for Orlando (3 percent). All told, 2,387 of the union's roughly 4,800 members voted.

Block is the first woman, and the first African-American, to be elected to the top office of Local 757 since its founding in 1917. She's also the first African-American unionist to be elected to a top union office in the Portland area in more than a decade.

At Local 757, president is also a full-time business representative, and oversees a staff of seven and two other full-time officers: vice president and financial secretary.

Block ran on a slate with incumbent vice president Jon Hunt and incumbent financial secretary Mary Longoria, both of whom were re-elected. Hunt won with 47 percent of the vote, outpolling Dan Martin and Christopher Day. And Longoria got 61 percent of the vote against challenger Anna Hicks.

Block, 62, grew up in Florida and Michigan, the daughter of hard-working migrant laborers. With a nurs-



Shirley Block in front of Schoppert Hall, ATU Local 757 headquarters in Northeast Portland.

ing license at Wayne State University, she worked in Detroit's Henry Ford Hospital before moving to Portland in 1974 for the weather. She worked as a nurse, then got a job as TriMet bus operator in 1981. She also married, had a daughter, divorced and remarried, and raised 11 foster children. Her daughter works at TriMet, as did her husband, now retired.

In the 34 years Block has worked at TriMet, she's been a bus operator, fare inspector, field operations coordinator, and road supervisor. She's also served several

terms as a member of the union Executive Board.

Within the union, she's known as an outspoken critic of TriMet management, regularly calling them out in her monthly column in the union newsletter. Her campaign for union president focused on countering attacks on union health and retiree benefits. Block said her unhappiness with the TriMet contract settlement—particularly some union concessions on health care—prompted her to run for office.

Now she says she'll work to re-establish unity and head out to meet members far from the union's Portland headquarters. Local 757 represents transit workers throughout Oregon and Southwest Washington, including bus drivers, mechanics, cleaners, and other workers at TriMet, Lane Transit District, C-TRAN, and a number of smaller transit districts, as well as several units of school bus and paratransit workers. More than a dozen collective bargaining agreements will need to be renegotiated in the next three years, including the TriMet contract, which expires Nov. 30, 2016.

For his part, Hansen says he's proud of the number of employees reinstated and grievances settled during his one term. And relations with TriMet have thawed somewhat since he took office. Hansen, 46, says he will return to his job as a TriMet bus operator and remain active in the union.