



**MEDICARE TURNS 50.** Scott Blau, president of the Oregon chapter of the Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA), hands out buttons at a gathering July 30 in Portland celebrating the 50th anniversary of Medicare and Medicaid. Similar events were held in more than 100 cities nationwide, including Medford. In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed legislation to establish Medicare for the elderly and Medicaid for low-income adults, children, pregnant women, and people with disabilities. Today it is the single largest source of health insurance in the United States, with 55 million people (660,000 in Oregon) covered. Despite its success, this year's U.S. House and U.S. Senate budgets seek to cut billions of dollars from the program and to transform it from a guarantee to a voucher program. The ARA opposes the cuts. It wants Congress to strengthen the program.

## ... Union contract for cannabis workers

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Reed owns a similar vertically integrated cannabis company in New Mexico—Natural Rx—which is also UFCW-represented. Natural Rx has medical marijuana dispensaries in Albuquerque and Las Cruces, plus a grow and processing operation.

In Oregon, Reed says he's one of 10 partners in Stoney Brothers LLC, along with New Mexico's former Republican governor Gary Johnson, CEO of Nevada-based Cannabis Sativa Inc.

Reed, once a member of Iron Workers Local 495 in Albuquerque, said he views the relationship with UFCW as a partnership. It was Reed who contacted the union, at the suggestion of a friend. UFCW has been part of efforts to legalize marijuana in Oregon and elsewhere, and the union has a new division devoted to marijuana and hemp workers known as

Cannabis Workers Rising.

Stoney Brothers displays union signage, and offers a 10 percent discount to union members. Currently, customers must

have a medical marijuana card, but starting Oct. 1, Oregon's licensed medical marijuana dispensaries will be allowed to sell to any adult 21 and over.

## U.S. wage, benefit growth at slowest pace in 33 years

Wages and benefits for American workers grew in the spring at the slowest pace in 33 years.

The employment cost index rose just 0.2 percent in the April-June quarter after a 0.7 increase

in the first quarter, the Labor Department reported. The index tracks wages, salaries and benefits. Wages and salaries alone also rose 0.2 percent. Both measures recorded the smallest quarterly gains since the second quarter of 1982.

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Labor's Community Service Agency & Rebuilding Together Present

## Hats Off To Skilled Labor Day of Service

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Date: Thursday, August 27th

Time: 8:00am – the projects are complete (approx. 3:00pm)

Location: Beaverton, Hillsboro – sites to be announced

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