

New public-sector 'right-to-work' measure filed in Oregon

On Nov. 20, anti-union attorney Jill Gibson turned in the first batch of 1,432 signatures on a new Oregon ballot measure, aimed at November 2016, that would eliminate any requirement for public employees to pay union dues or "fair share" fees to cover the costs of union representation.

Gibson submitted four other versions of the same measure in March, but withdrew them in April and October after she de-

termined that the measures would do poorly among voters because of the ballot title that the state attorney general's office assigned to them. A ballot title is the official summary of a measure that appears on printed ballots. The ballot titles assigned to Odell's measures were identical: "Non-union public employees may benefit from union bargaining without sharing representation costs; modifies representation obligations." Odell challenged those ballot titles, but the Oregon Supreme Court

upheld them.

Like the other versions, the newest version of Odell's Public Employee Choice Act attempts to use technicalities to dodge the union "free rider" argument. Union supporters argue, with justification, that workers covered by a union contract should pay at least the cost of negotiating and administering the contract, even if they don't want to be represented by the union. Odell's measure would require public employees who want to be in the union to annually indi-

cate in writing that they choose to join and be represented by a labor organization. All others would be labelled "independent" public employees, who in theory wouldn't be covered by the union contract and therefore shouldn't have to pay for it. Public employers would be prohibited from basing independent employees' wages, benefits, and other employment terms on the union contract; instead, they would have to make separate terms for each independent employee.

"The vanishing sanctity of the picket line is as valid an indicator as any of our political disarray and decay. We'll have a functioning movement when the old rule is in force again: Never cross a picket line."

— Union organizer Sidney Lens, 1912-1986

Teamsters strike Oregon City-based beer distributor

About 80 members of Teamsters Local 162 went on strike Nov. 17 at General Distributors, Inc. (GDI), of Oregon City — truck drivers, warehouse workers, and sales employees. GDI distributes Miller-Coors beers and dozens of craft beers, wines and ciders in 11 Oregon counties, from Salem to Hood River.

Local 162 says the profitable company is seeking \$1.5 million a year in concessions, which

works out to \$19,000 per worker. A company statement denied those particulars, and said the strike came as a complete surprise. GDI appears to be seeking the same (lower) wages and benefits that its competitor Maletis pays under a separate contract with Local 162. GDI also said it's hiring permanent replacements, and that almost 20 percent of the strikers have resigned from the union

and returned to work.

The two sides haven't met to bargain since Oct. 30, but a new bargaining session with a federal mediator was scheduled for Dec. 2, after this issue went to press. The old contract expired Nov. 1.

Local 162 says the strike will continue until a new agreement is reached — and approved by a vote of the members. Pickets continue 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



Oregon Democrats honor IBEW's Vandermostens

John and Shirley Vandermosten were named Volunteers of the Year by the Democratic Party of Oregon. John is a retired 25-year member of IBEW Local 48. The Vandermostens, who live in Gresham, are active in the Democratic Party in East Multnomah County. The award was presented at the DPO's holiday party Nov. 21 at the IBEW Local 48 union hall in Northeast Portland. Joining them in the celebration was Gov. Kate Brown (pictured above right).



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