

... 2015 in review

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— paid where there are 10 or more employees (six or more in Portland), and unpaid where there are fewer. Here are some other highlights (and a few low-lights) of the year:

OREGON

- **In the capitol, some real gains for working people** Besides sick leave, the Oregon Legislature also approved a state-sponsored low-fee retirement savings plan for the 400,000 private sector workers in Oregon who don't have an employer-sponsored retirement plan; it will debut in 2017. But lawmakers punted on proposals to increase transportation funding, curb wage theft, and raise the minimum wage.
- **PERS cuts struck down** The state supreme court ruled it unconstitutional for the Oregon Legislature to reduce cost-of-

living increases for retired public employees — after they worked decades to earn their benefits.

- **Big organizing win** At Eugene's PeaceHealth Sacred Heart hospital, 1,100 CNAs, housekeepers, and other support workers voted to join SEIU Local 49
- **Big projects in limbo** Building trades unions got pledges to use union labor from developers on a number of controversial projects, but none moved forward in 2015. Portland welcomed Pembina's proposed propane export terminal, then reconsidered. The proposed Tesoro-Savage oil train terminal at the Port of Vancouver is up for review by Washington Gov. Jay Inslee. And the proposed Jordan Cove liquified natural gas terminal in Coos Bay is under review by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

Gone but not forgotten

The local labor movement lost some dedicated hands in 2015. They are remembered for the lives they led in service of the trade union movement. Among them:

- **Bob Stanfill**, a leader of Plasterers Local 82 and Oregon State Building Trades Council
- **Ed Whelan**, former Oregon AFL-CIO president
- **Bruce Zimmerman**, former president of IBEW Local 48
- **Billy McNicholas**, former leader of the Portland Metal Trades Council and Local 290
- **Robert Crumpton**, retired Oregon Education Association (OEA) executive director
- **Ron Fortune**, former head of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council

What's ahead in 2016

NATIONAL



- **Friedrichs vs. California Teachers Association** On Jan. 11, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear a case that could deliver a body blow to public sector unions: The court is being asked to rule that no public employee can be required to pay dues to a union, even though the union negotiates and enforces wages and workplace rights and enjoys majority support in the workplace.
- **Trans-Pacific Partnership vote** — President Obama gets to set the timetable for a ratification vote in Congress. The treaty is unpopular with the public, so judging by past tactics, the vote might be scheduled for the lame duck Congress after the November election.
- **Presidential election** Hilary Clinton? Bernie Sanders? Donald Trump? One of them may win the November 2016 election, and for working people, it matters a lot: Presidents propose budgets, oversee enforcement of laws, and help shape the political climate.

OREGON

- **Minimum wage fight** In its February short session, the Oregon Legislature will take up proposals to raise the minimum wage. If they fail to raise it, or raise it high enough, initiatives to raise it to \$13.50 or \$15 could vie for the November 2016 ballot.
- **Ballot measure bonanza** Besides the minimum wage, dozens of initiatives have been filed for 2016, including proposals to raise corporate taxes, phase out coal-generated electricity, privatize liquor sales, repeal mandatory minimum sentencing laws, make English the official language, and establish universal healthcare. The campaigns vary widely in their resources; they'll have until July 8 to gather signatures.

PORTLAND

- **Gas tax for street maintenance** Portland City Commissioner Steve Novick says he'll push once again for more funds to tackle the city's street maintenance backlog, this time with a proposal to raise the gas tax.



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