

NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

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Bernie or Hillary? AFL-CIO won't pick sides

The national AFL-CIO will remain neutral in the presidential primary this year. At the Feb. 23 AFL-CIO Executive Committee meeting



Clinton



Sanders

in San Diego, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka limited political discussion to efforts to raise the minimum wage and defeat the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and tamped down talk about the presidential race.

Northern Virginia Labor Federation president Dan Duncan, who attended the meeting, said union leaders decided there will be no endorsement now in the presidential race between former secretary of state Hillary Clinton and U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont.

“And when anybody started commenting on one of the two, Rich would pull the mike,” cutting the speaker off.

At least 23 unions — including several that are not affiliated with the AFL-CIO — have endorsed Clinton. Three AFL-CIO-affiliated unions are backing Sanders. An AFL-CIO federation-wide presidential endorsement requires votes from delegates representing a two-thirds majority of the federation's members. Previous to the Executive Committee session, other union leaders ruled out endorsing any of the Republican presidential hopefuls, all of whom oppose unions in one way or another. — (PAI)

Deal ends ATI Steelworker lockout

Locked-out workers in six states will return to work March 14 under a settlement between United Steelworkers of America (USW) and Allegheny Technologies Inc. (ATI). The two sides reached a tentative four-year agreement Feb. 22, and members voted on it March 1. ATI locked out the 2,200 workers Aug. 15, 2015 — after USW didn't schedule a vote on the company's final offer by a deadline the company set. The lockout included about 180 workers at ATI's Oremet titanium plant in Albany, Oregon.

The settlement came 10 days after a National Labor Relations Board complaint that the company didn't bargain in good faith, and thus its lockout was illegal. The complaint was scheduled to be heard by a judge May 23, and if upheld, would have made the company liable for back pay — minus any wages or unemployment insurance compensation workers received

since the lockout began. But USW agreed to withdraw charges as part of the settlement. Under the settlement:

- New hires won't be eligible for pension benefits; instead ATI will contribute \$2.65 an hour to a 401(k) plan.
- New hires won't get retiree health insurance, but will get an extra 50 cents to their 401(k)
- ATI may use outside contractors, but assures USW that it won't result in any active employee losing employment.
- ATI will pay 90 percent of health insurance premiums, down from 100 percent previously.
- Health insurance benefits remain the same.
- Workers will get a \$3,500 signing bonus spread out over four years.
- A \$1.50-an-hour quarterly bonus is eliminated; instead base pay is raised \$1 an hour and ATI will contribute 50 cents an hour to a retiree medical fund.
- ATI will reinstate a profit-sharing plan; workers would get from 2 to 6.5 percent of profits each quarter, up to a cap of \$3.75 million.

- All replacement workers hired by ATI will be let go.

ATI also increased a company-paid supplemental unemployment insurance benefit for workers who are laid off when a plant is temporarily idled. That may end up being used immediately for some workers: Two plants in Pennsylvania will remain idled for now, and other plants will be reducing the workforce. All workers will be laid off their first day back, with most then recalled immediately.

In Albany, 130 workers will return, and 30 will be laid off; 12 others retired since the lockout. Picketing will continue until workers are back on the job.

The lockout prompted lawmakers in Oregon and Massachusetts to introduce bills extending unemployment six months for workers locked out in a labor dispute. In Oregon, the bill was heading toward passage as of press time.

OREGON'S FREE-TRADE DEMOCRATS

TPP divides labor from U.S. Reps. Blumenauer, Bonamici, and Schrader

Last year, five out of six House Democrats voted against Fast Track — a law that will make it easier for Congress to pass more NAFTA-style trade deals over the next six years. So how is it that all three Portland-area Democrats — Earl Blumenauer, Suzanne Bonamici, and Kurt Schrader — voted for it? Maybe pro-Fast-Track Nike and Intel speak more sweetly and carry a bigger stick? Thanks to Fast Track, President Obama could ask Congress to implement his Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) deal, and within 90 days, Congress would have to vote on it, with limited debate and no amendments allowed. Obama can start that clock ticking at any time.



At a Feb. 17 breakfast meeting, Congressman Kurt Schrader (D-Oregon) and Northwest Oregon Labor Council Executive Director Bob Tackett lock eyes. Tackett — a member of United Steelworkers — worked at the Reynolds Aluminum plant in Troutdale until it closed in 2000. Schrader voted last June to “fast track” future NAFTA-style trade agreements through Congress.

Schrader: Still reading up on it

By Don McIntosh
Associate editor

Going into a Northwest Oregon Labor Council (NOLC) breakfast with Clackamas County Democratic Congressman Kurt Schrader, I wasn't sure what to expect. Labor's ties to Schrader frayed last summer when the

“Blue Dog” Democrat voted to “fast track” Congressional approval of future NAFTA-style trade agreements. Schrader was later quoted in a DC blog calling national AFL-CIO president Rich Trumka a “bully” because

Bonamici: Still undecided

By Michael Gutwig
Editor and Manager

U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici says she is still undecided on how she will vote on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a major initiative of the Obama Administration.

The Oregon Democrat told the Executive Board of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council on Feb. 22 that she is still reviewing the complex two-thousand-plus page document that was negotiated in secret starting in 2010. The full text of the agreement was released last November.

The United States and 11 other Pacific Rim nations (40 percent of the world's economy) — Australia, Brunei, Canada,

Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam and Japan — signed the TPP on Feb. 4, 2016. It now must be ratified by Congress on a “fast track” vote, which means the deal must be voted up-or-down without any amendments. Bonamici supported the bill that implemented fast track — formally known as Trade Promotion Authority.

The AFL-CIO strongly opposes the TPP, while corporate America strongly supports it. Bonamici's district includes Nike and Intel.

The labor federation said it provided the Obama Administration with ideas to improve



Bonamici

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