

...Portland 10-cent gas tax measure gets some labor support

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tive Secretary John Mohlis says lawmakers will try again next year.

“At the end of the day, if the roads are crumbling and your car is getting torn up, or kids can’t safely walk down the street or cross the street, you have to suck it up,” said Bob Tackett, executive secretary-treasurer of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council (NOLC). “It’s got to be paid for. It’s not going to magically happen.”

If passed by voters in May, the new gas tax could not be implemented until September 2016, and would expire in four years.

Besides NOLC, the Portland gas tax ballot measure is backed by Portland Fire Fighters Association, Professional & Technical Employees Local 17 (formerly COPPEA), AFSCME Local 189, Portland Association of Teachers, and all five members of Portland City Council.

Ironically, the union that would be most directly affected is staying neutral. Laborers Local 483 represents PBOT workers who do the work of repaving and filling potholes. The union’s political action committee contributed \$500 to the measure, but the union itself remained neutral. Local 483 Business Manager Wesley Bucholz said the measure does too little to solve the problem, and union members are still cooling off after years of conflict with city managers.



ONE POT HOLE DOWN, AND 7,500 MORE TO GO At left, Steve Novick, the City Commissioner in charge of the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT), helps a street maintenance crew fill a pothole at NW 12th and Everett April 19. Behind him (from left) are Jeff Peterson, Cory Long, Billy Spires, and Mark Bartholomew, members of Laborers Local 483 (and manager Suzanne Kahn directly behind). PBOT crews have filled over 7,500 potholes in the last year.

Verizon gives striking CWA-IBEW members ‘last, best, and final’ offer

Verizon has given 39,000 striking workers what the company says is its final offer on a new labor contract. Workers — members of Communications Workers of America and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in nine Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states, plus Washington, D.C. — struck on April 13 after 10 months of bargaining. The previous contract expired on Aug. 1, 2015.

The highly profitable telecom is demanding cuts in health care insurance and the unlimited right to offshore call center jobs, and is offering only small raises over a five-year pact.

“Verizon is becoming the poster child for everything people in this country are angry about,” said CWA District 2-13 Vice President Edward Mooney. “This very profitable company wants to push people down. And it wants to push communities down by not fully repairing the (wire) network and by not building

out FiOS.”

Verizon CEO Lowell McAdam was paid \$18 million last year, more than 200 times the compensation of the average Verizon employee, the unions pointed out. The company’s top five executives made \$233 million over the last five years. And last year alone, Verizon paid out \$13.5 billion in dividends and stock buybacks to shareholders. “But they claim they can’t afford a fair contract,” Mooney said.

IBEW’s Myles Calvey told Workers Independent News that Verizon barely moved from its hardline concessions position.

CWA said it plans to spread picketing to Verizon wireless stores across the country.

(Editor’s Note: Press Associates Inc. contributed to this report.)

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