

# NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

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## Big union win at PeaceHealth Vancouver

Hospital techs voted nearly 3-to-1 in favor of unionizing

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In ballots tallied June 2, hospital technicians at PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center in Vancouver voted 211 to 77 to unionize.

They'll now be members of PeaceHealth Southwest Caregivers United, a unit of Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals (OFNHP), which is itself an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

Turnout was extraordinarily high: 93 percent of workers in the unit cast ballots. And the overwhelmingly pro-union margin — almost 3-to-1 — came despite an active anti-union campaign by hospital management. Union supporters report that leading up to the vote, hospital managers and executives tore union fliers down from bulletin boards, and interrogated



**TEARS OF JOY:** Union supporters hug June 2 as their win is announced.

workers — asking them if they like working there and how they planned to vote in the union election. If true, some of those tactics are illegal under federal labor law; AFT filed charges May 27 with the National Labor Relations Board detailing illegal surveillance and coercive statements and actions by PeaceHealth managers.

PeaceHealth Southwest cardiovascular technologist Danene Flower says the management offensive began after May 6, when AFT requested an election.

“Most of these people I’d never seen before in my life,” Flower said. “They were wearing buttons saying ‘Give us a

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## Lead crisis in schools

The pattern seems so familiar: Top brass at Portland Public Schools (PPS) didn't attend to the issue of lead in drinking water, failed to act on several lead test results in a timely way, then ran for cover as panic spread among parents. At that point they took hasty and costly damage control measures — putting two managers on paid leave, hiring an outside law firm to fig-

ure out what happened, buying a million plastic bottles of water, and covering up every water source (not just those that tested high for lead). The district's own skilled maintenance workers, who could be installing lead-free fixtures, were instead tasked with delivering cases of plastic water bottles and picking up empties.

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## City union 'breakup' — Laborers Local 483 leaves DCTU union coalition

Laborers Local 483 — which represents parks, street maintenance, water and sewer workers at the City of Portland — is leaving the District Council of Trade Unions (DCTU). DCTU is a coalition of city unions that jointly negotiates a single contract. In ballots counted June 1, Local 483 members voted by greater than a 70 percent margin to withdraw from the DCTU.

The vote follows internal tensions within the DCTU during the most recent contract negotiations, chiefly over differences in strategy and priorities. Local 483 has tended to favor more vocal and adversarial tactics, and hasn't been as involved as other DCTU unions in mayor and city council races. With about 600 members, Local 483 is the second largest union in the DCTU; AFSCME Local 189, with about 840 members is the largest. The others are IBEW



**CITY UNIONS UNITED:** In August 2013, members of DCTU unions rallied for a fair contract outside Portland City Hall.

Local 48, Machinists District Lodge 24, Operating Engineers Local 701, Plumbers and Fitters Local 290, and Painters and Allied Trades District Council 5.

“This [withdrawal] isn't a reflection on what the other DCTU members do,” said Local 483 Business Manager Wesley Buchholz. “Our members wanted to

see if they can get a better agreement on their own.”

“It's like a break up,” Buchholz said. “If it doesn't work out, we can always get back together.”

Local 483's Executive Board recommended leaving, but presented both pros and cons to members. On the plus side, a

smaller bargaining team might make for shorter negotiations. On the other hand, staying might better leverage the strength of greater numbers.

The current DCTU contract covers 1,656 members of all seven unions, and expires July 1, 2017. Negotiations are expected to begin later this year. Leaving the DCTU means Local 483 will bargain separately going forward.

Buchholz said one potential drawback of leaving is that city negotiators would play unions against each other; to counter that, he said the unions will have to remain in close communication.

“It might be easier to talk if we're neighbors than if we're living in the same house,” Buchholz said.

The city's fire and police unions also bargain on their own. So does Professional &

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Technical Employees Local 17, the union formerly known as City of Portland Professional Employees Association.

Local 189 President Mark Gipson didn't downplay that the DCTU unions have had different cultures and strategies, but said he wishes Local 483 the best of luck going forward.

“I really want this breakup to be amicable,” Gipson said. “It has to be.”