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TRADE

Why, Kate, why?

Oregon governor declares support for Trans-Pacific Partnership

SALEM—At a time when both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump say they're against the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), Oregon's Democratic Gov. Kate Brown has come out in favor of it. TPP is a NAFTA-style pact between the United States and 11 Pacific Rim nations, including three that have poor human rights records and no current trade agreement with the United States. Unions are strongly opposed to it.

TPP negotiations concluded last October, but to take effect, the pact must be approved by Congress.

A spokeswoman for Gov. Brown told The Oregonian/OregonLive editorial board in an early August email that Brown supports ratification of the deal. It may be the first time Brown has supported such an agreement. Brown is a former state legislator from Southeast Portland who became secretary of state and then governor when John Kitzhaber resigned. She's up for election this November.

"I'm disappointed by Governor Brown's support of the Trans-Pacific Partnership," said



ANTI-TPP BLIMP IN SALEM: Members of the United Steelworkers Legislative Committee fly a 25-foot protest blimp over the State Capitol Aug. 23 to denounce Oregon Gov. Kate Brown's support of the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain in an official statement. "Oregon's unions continue to stand united in our opposition to the TPP, because it's a bad deal for working people in our state. We are still reeling from the impact of previous free trade agreements. Since the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) over 50,000 Oregon workers lost their jobs, and those lost jobs are certified by the Department of Labor as the direct result of free trade agreements."

On Aug. 23, the United Steelworkers Legislative Committee held a rally on the front steps of the State Capitol to protest Brown's support of the TPP. Afterward, they met with the governor for nearly 45 minutes.

"She apologized for not informing labor before she announced her support," said Bob Tackett, a member of Steelworkers Local 335 and executive secretary-treasurer of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council.

"She said she took her lead

from Sen. (Ron) Wyden," Tackett told the Labor Press. "We told her that she ought to talk to Sen. (Jeff) Merkley."

Wyden, a Democrat, helped push a fast track vote through the Senate, and he strongly supports the TPP. Fast track, also referred to as trade promotion authority, allows for an up-or-down vote with limited debate and no amendments.

Merkley, the only Democratic senator from Oregon and Washington to oppose the TPP, says it puts American workers in direct competition with people earning a dollar an hour or even less overseas.

In a letter to a constituent that was sent to the Labor Press, Merkley said "such an unbalanced trade agreement would be devastating for many workers, families, and communities and put an inevitable downward pressure on incomes for ordinary Americans."

"The TPP has not meaningfully changed from past trade deals that have cost Americans good-paying jobs in several important areas," Merkley wrote.

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