

# Oregon labor gearing up for high-stakes legislative session

The Oregon Legislature won't begin its next session until February, but Oregon labor organizations are getting ready. Democrats will have a 35-25 majority in the House and a 17-13 margin in the Senate, and as usual, there's a lot at stake.

## Budget battle royale

Oregon faces a projected \$1.7 billion budget shortfall over the next two years. Oregon voters could have raised \$3 billion a year in new revenue from top corporations by passing Measure 97, but it went down by a three-to-two margin. The measure's union backers are choosing to interpret that as a rejection of that particular proposal, not rejection of the idea of big corporations paying their fair share. They'd like the Legislature to raise taxes on big corporations, but no specific proposal has emerged for how to do that, and any plan faces the requirement of a 3/5 supermajority.

Gov. Kate Brown has proposed to deal with the budget shortfall by raising \$897 million in new revenue and making \$800 million in cuts. Her budget calls for taxes on insurers, tobacco and alcohol, and ending a corporate tax break granted in 2013. It would also lead to tuition increases, teacher layoffs,



Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain headlined the launch of the Fair Shot for All Coalition's 2017 campaign.

and social service cuts. Labor leaders say they won't accept those cuts while Oregon corporations still have the lowest taxes in the nation.

## Fair Shot, round three

The Fair Shot for All Coalition, a statewide labor-community alliance begun in 2014, unveiled its 2017 agenda Dec. 1. It in-

cludes a system of paid family medical leave for all Oregon workers, an end to "no cause" evictions, an end to the statewide ban on rent control, an end to racial profiling by police, an effort to ensure health coverage for all Oregon kids, and the extension of reproductive health services to non-citizens.

## Health care

Obamacare expanded Medicaid to an extra 400,000 low-income Oregonians over the last four years, but the state's bill is coming due (assuming it isn't repealed next year by Congress.) The feds picked up 100 percent of the cost of those newly eligible for Medicaid the first three years, but starting Jan. 1, 2017,

Oregon will have to pay for 5 percent of the expanded Medicaid cost, and lawmakers will have to figure out how to pay for that.

## Fair workweek

United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555's priority legislation will be to rein in growing scheduling abuses like unpaid on-call shifts and last-minute schedule changes that create chaos for many workers and their families.

## Playing defense

Business groups and Republican allies are looking once again to cut public employee salaries and benefits, particularly in the Public Employee Retirement System (PERS). Public employee unions will fight to ensure pension promises are kept.

## Transportation

Aging and inadequate infrastructure, and unprecedented levels of congestion, are posing a serious impediment to the state's economy and quality of life. To deal with that, the Building Trades, together with the AFL-CIO and business groups, will push for a robust statewide multimodal transportation infrastructure spending. A gas tax increase will be one component.



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## PORTLAND

### City Council passes tax on excessive CEO pay

In a 3-1 vote Dec. 7, Portland City Council made Portland the first city in the nation to tax publicly traded corporations for sky-high CEO pay. Companies that pay their CEO more than 100 times the average employee will have to pay an additional 10 percent in the City's business tax, and those paying over 250 times will pay an extra 25 percent.

The proposal comes from

outgoing Commissioner Steve Novick, and it's made possible by new disclosure requirements that take effect next year under the federal Dodd-Frank financial reform legislation.

Dan Saltzman was the lone council member to vote against it; Nick Fish was absent but would have voted no.

The tax is meant to make a statement on growing income disparity, and raise \$2.5 million a year for the City.



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