

2016 in review

As chronicled in 24 issues of the Northwest Labor Press, here are some of the year's most important stories

■ NATIONAL

Scalia's death ends Friedrichs threat

In a case known as *Friedrichs vs. California Teachers Association*, the U.S. Supreme Court was getting ready to impose so-called "right-to-work" status on all public employees in the United States — making dues strictly voluntary and thus weakening unions considerably. But the death of conservative Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia in February resulted in a 4-4 deadlock on the case. The threat to labor could return, however, if a similar case is filed after another anti-union justice is appointed.



Antonin Scalia

Unions count Verizon strike as a win

America's biggest strike in four years took place in April and May as 39,000 members of CWA and IBEW struck Verizon's East Coast landline operations rather than accept contract concessions at the highly-profitable company. The strike ended after 45 days with a deal brokered by U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez on terms the union called a win, including 10.5 percent raises over four years, and protections against outsourcing of call center jobs.



Solidarity in Portland: IBEW 48's Terry Reigle

Clinton loses in the electoral college

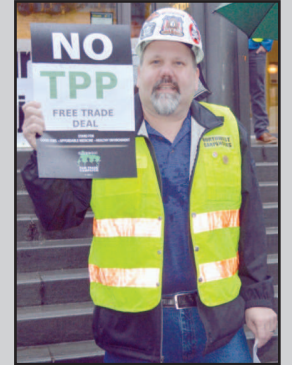
In the general election, Hillary Clinton had the support of nearly every labor union in the country, and she won nearly 3 million more votes than Donald Trump. But she lost where it mattered: The electoral college, thanks to narrow Trump wins in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.



A cardboard cutout at Hillary Clinton campaign offices was her only public appearance in Oregon.

Trans-Pacific Partnership, dead at last

For the first time since NAFTA, a corporate-written trade deal died on the vine. The 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) was one of Obama's top priorities, but broad public hostility to the deal — and the defection of some Republicans over industry concerns — prevented ratification in Congress. Trump's election sealed its fate.



Carpenters Local 146 union officer Norm Curry protests the TPP March 21, 2016.

■ OREGON

Top legislative win: Minimum wage

With unions prepared to put minimum wage increases on the ballot, the Oregon Legislature stepped up to do the job and put the minimum wage on track to 12.50 to 14.75 by 2022, depending on the region. That amounts to an hourly raise of \$3.25 to \$5.50 an hour for hundreds of thousands of Oregon workers.



Gov. Kate Brown signs minimum wage legislation, a top priority of the AFL-CIO.



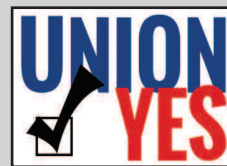
Photo courtesy of the Yes on 97 campaign

Biggest ballot defeat: Measure 97

Despite \$16 million in local and national union money, a proposal to raise taxes on the biggest corporations doing business in Oregon was rejected by voters. As a result, instead of new investment in schools, health care and senior services, the state of Oregon faces a budget shortfall next year, once again.

Biggest union organizing wins

- 886 support workers at PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center joined OFNHP Local 5017.
- 793 PSU grad students joined American Federation of Teachers /AAUP.
- 310 hospital technicians at PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center joined AFT.
- 165 workers at Boeing paint contractor Commercial Aircraft Painting Services joined the Machinists.
- 80 DirecTV workers joined CWA Local 7906.
- 61 alcohol and drug treatment workers at Volunteers of America joined AFSCME.



Biggest union organizing losses

- 205 workers at a Jeld-Wen door plant in Chiloquin rejected the Machinists union in a 52-137 vote.
- 179 workers at Portland Specialty Baking rejected the Bakers union in a 38-123 vote.



Oregon Bernie vote: a mandate for bolder action by Democrats?

Hillary Clinton won among Democrats nationwide, but in Oregon, Democrats showed an appetite for a bolder kind of politics — backing a candidate who rejected Wall Street money and called for universal health care, free public college tuition, and a \$15-an-hour minimum wage. In Oregon, Bernie Sanders packed arenas and outpolled Clinton by over 70,000 votes, 56 to 44 percent.

■ WASHINGTON

Minimum wage and sick leave

Raise the minimum wage to \$13.50, and give workers the right paid sick leave? Voters did it, approving union-backed I-1433 by 59-41 percent.



Sound gets serious transit investment

Another ballot victory was voter approval for an ambitious 25-year plan to make \$54 billion worth of transit improvements in the Puget Sound region, including 62 miles of light rail and new bus and heavy rail service to King, Pierce and Snohomish counties. The project will mean union jobs, less congestion, and a cleaner environment.

Madore is no more, in Clark County

Flamboyantly anti-union Clark County Commissioner David Madore — who once pushed unsuccessfully for a local "right-to-work" ordinance — lost reelection in the August primary. In the general election, union-backed candidate Tanisha Harris lost to John Blom, but local unions were still pleased to see their nemesis go.



Berry boycott ends with union deal

A three-year union boycott against Sakuma and Driscoll berries ended in September, when Skagit Valley agri-giant Sakuma Berries agreed to allow a union election and recognize and bargain a contract with the farmworkers union.

