

Who's on our side?

By Tom Chamberlain Oregon AFL-CIO President



GOP ramping up to dismantle the labor movement

In a few days, the Republican Party will be in control of both houses of Congress and the presidency for the second time in 70 years. The agenda of Republican leadership of the Senate and House is not secret: Repeal Obamacare, leaving 30 million of the most vulnerable without health care. Make no mistake about it, Republican leaders are not just coming for Obamacare, they are coming after all our health care, and Social Security, too. We expect them to tee up, through the budget process later this spring, massive cuts to Medicaid, the privatizations of Medicare, and cuts to Social Security benefits. Any attacks on Medicare or Social Security will be major points of vulnerability for Republicans, and especially for Trump, since he made repeated, explicit promises not to cut either program. How many Americans who voted for Trump want to work until they are 68?

What is occurring in Washington, D.C., is a ramp up to dismantle the American union movement. Federal employees will experience wage freezes, privatization, and the downsizing of their workforce through attrition. The Building Trades face either an attempt to eliminate Davis Bacon (prevailing wage) or the development of strategies to circumvent prevailing wage. Trump's promised \$1 trillion infrastructure plan may be funded by tax credits, allowing corporate America to sidestep prevailing wage laws. Public-sector unions will be watching who will be appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court vacancy, knowing that a bad decision on a *Friedrichs*-like case would implement "right-to-work" for public workers nationwide. There are still rumors that "right-to-work" and "paycheck deception," which limits how union workers can make their voices heard in the political process, are targets for federal legislation.

The Koch brothers have wasted little time in implementing a state strategy to undermine workers' rights. Kentucky Republicans, who gained control of all three branches of their government in November, slammed through "right-to-work," paycheck deception, and repealed prevailing wage in a bogus emergency legislative session of two weeks' age. All three bills went into immediate effect.

All three branches of government are under Republican control in Missouri and New Hampshire. Both states face legislation drafted to implement "right-to-work," paycheck deception, and repeal prevailing wage.

At this juncture in our history, our first priority is to work and fight together. When we are divided, we will surely fail. When "right-to-work" was passed in Michigan, first responders were exempted. Just last week, the Michigan Legislature passed "right-to-work" for first responders. This is the time to stand together as a labor movement — and with our community partners. Understanding the power we have collectively, we will educate and activate Oregonians.

Our fight will be statewide: Klamath Falls, Bend, Medford, Salem, Eugene, and Portland. I believe, by and large, our Congressional delegation will stand with all Oregonians. But for those who support an anti-worker agenda, we will hold you accountable.

We are living in an historical moment. Every one of us has an obligation to fight as hard as we can, to get off the couch and activate and agitate. Fighting together, we can stop attacks on Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. We stopped the Trans-Pacific Partnership dead in its tracks. Fighting together, we have defeated scores of ballot measures that would have undermined workers' rights and the quality of life in Oregon.

Tom Chamberlain is president of the Oregon AFL-CIO, a 130,000-member-strong federation of labor unions.

WORKERS RIGHTS

Burgerville suspends unionist over a bagel

A vocal leader of the campaign to unionize the Burgerville fast food chain has been suspended without pay since Jan. 6 — ostensibly for failing to pay 70 cents for a bagel and cream cheese.

Jordan Vaandering, who has worked for 14 months at the Burgerville store in Vancouver Plaza, thinks the bagel is a pretext, and that his union activity is the real reason for his suspension. Vaandering, who's incidentally the nephew of Oregon teachers union president Hanna Vaandering, has been active recruiting coworkers to join the Burgerville Workers Union, an affiliate of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The union is calling for affordable employer-provided health-care and a \$5.00 raise for all hourly Burgerville workers, among other demands. Their campaign has been endorsed by the Oregon AFL-CIO and half a



Jordan Vaandering

dozen other labor organizations.

Vaandering says an assistant manager gave him the bagel during a paid break on Jan. 5, and didn't ask him to pay for it. Several hours after Vaandering opened the restaurant the next day, he was confronted by the store's general manager about the "bagel incident" — the manager said he'd been informed by human resources that Vaandering had taken a bagel without paying for it. Vaandering offered to pay, but was refused and sent home five hours before the end of his shift.

That same day, Vaandering filed an unfair labor practice charge with the National Labor Relations Board. It's against the National Labor Relations Act for an employer to discipline a worker for taking part in union activity.

On June 7, the union organized supporters to call the com-

pany, and on Jan. 9, Vaandering, two coworkers, and two IWW members visited company HQ to present a bagel and \$0.70 to a company executive, along with a request that he be returned to work.

The next day, Vaandering was called into a meeting with the store general manager and human resource consultant Lacey Halpern, told he wasn't allowed to take notes or have a witness, and asked for his side of the story. Vaandering says they told him they'd let him know their decision by Jan. 11. He was still waiting for the call as of Jan. 17.

PICKET TO BRING BACK JORDAN

If Burgerville, as expected, fires union activist Jordan Vaandering, the Burgerville Workers Union plans to picket outside the Rose Quarter Burgerville before the Lakers-Blazers game.

- **Time:** Wed., Jan. 25, 6:30-8 p.m.
- **Place:** Burgerville, 1135 NE MLK Jr Blvd., Portland
- **More info:** <http://bit.ly/2jXsuge>

Black history month

TOP 10 REASONS

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