

On-the-job fatalities in Oregon increase

SALEM — Sixty-one people died on the job in Oregon during 2016, according to a preliminary report issued March 7 by the Department of Consumer and Business Services (DCBS). That's up from 2015's figure of 41 deaths. [The Workers Memorial Day list contains 66 names because it was updated more recently.]

The 61 figure is based on a new data collection program, begun in 2015, that is designed to provide a more comprehensive review of workplace deaths. Previously released figures included only deaths covered by the Oregon workers' compensation system. The new Workplace Fatalities in Oregon (WFO) program tracks on-the-job deaths, regardless of workers' compensation status. As a result, the program now also includes workplace deaths involving self-employed people, city of Portland police and fire employees, federal employees, and incidents occurring in Oregon to workers with out-of-state employers.

"While Oregon workplaces are safer today than in previous decades, there are still far too many preventable on-the-job deaths each year," said Michael Wood, administrator for the Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Oregon OSHA). "A dramatic increase such as we saw last year helps to drive that lesson home. And it certainly serves as a reminder

that we must do more in our struggle against death in the workplace."

Because the WFO program started in 2015, comprehensive data — including total workplace deaths and numbers specific to industry, occupation, and injury — are available only for 2015 and 2016. Based on WFO guidelines, however, total workplace deaths were estimated for 2012 through 2014. Total fatality counts in 2012, 2013, and 2014 were 40, 49, and 63, respectively, meaning that 2015 was one of the lowest totals in recent years and 2016 was one of the highest. Averaged over five years, there were approximately 51 on-the-job deaths annually.

Other highlights of the WFO report include:

- Nearly half (29) of all 61 workplace deaths in 2016 were due to motor vehicle accidents, while 28 percent (17) of workers died due to contact with objects.
- The agriculture, forestry, and fishing industry had the most workplace fatalities (24) in 2016 — nearly double 2015's figure of 13.
- Twenty-eight of the 61 workplace deaths were accepted compensable fatalities.

There were three events in 2016 that led to multiple deaths:

- Three fishermen died when their boat sank.
- Two sales associates were killed in a head-on collision.
- Two construction workers were killed in a motor vehicle accident.

The WFO program excludes deaths in the workplace that are not directly linked to a work activity or harmful work exposure, such as suicides.

Car crash kills union organizer in Oregon

A union organizer was among the more than five dozen workers who died on the job in Oregon in 2016.

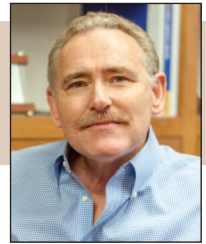
Linda Cushing, a national representative/organizer for the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and a former staff director for Portland-based Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals Local 5017, died in a car accident on the afternoon of March 21, 2016.

A resident of Fullerton, California, Cushing, 69, was in Oregon working on healthcare organizing efforts, including the campaign for LPNs and techs at PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center in Vancouver. She was driving on U.S. Highway 26 near Warm Springs — reportedly on her way to a meeting of hospital techs who wanted to form a union — when her car crossed the center line and crashed head-on with an SUV.

A former adjunct college professor, Cushing got the organizing bug after helping her colleagues unionize in Orange County California. She was hired by AFT and later was assigned to work with Local 5017.

Who's on our side?

By Tom Chamberlain Oregon AFL-CIO President



GOP Congressman Greg Walden moves further to the right

Twenty years ago, when Greg Walden was in the Oregon Legislature, he was viewed as a moderate Republican. He would, depending on the issue, vote for pro-worker legislation. I found him to be honest, fair and willing to listen to arguments on both sides of the legislation before deciding.

After 18 years in Congress, he has climbed the rungs of the Congressional Republican leadership ladder. U.S. Rep. Walden served two terms as chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee. The role of the committee is to elect Republican candidates to the United States House of Representatives. There is little doubt that Congressman Walden is a competent leader, and over the course of his two terms has maintained historic Republican majorities. He stepped down from this position when he was elected to chair the powerful House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

Along Walden's path to the chairmanship he moved further and further to the right. Republican House Members have voted 54 times to repeal or defund Obamacare, and Walden has voted "yes" to repeal every single time. As chair of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Walden was a strong supporter of the American Health Care Act (Trumpcare), which would replace the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare). If passed, the AHCA would have denied benefits to 24 million Americans and would have given a back-door tax cut to wealthy Americans of \$600 million. The AHCA did pass out of Walden's committee but never received a floor vote due to lack of support from the Republican Caucus.

During the February Congressional recess, Republican representatives held town halls in their districts. Their town halls were packed with dissatisfied citizens who were opposed to the repeal of Obamacare. Congressman Walden chose not to have town halls during this recess.

A week ago, Rep. Walden announced that he would hold town halls throughout his district the week of April 10. This is a surprising move by the Congressman, since he hasn't held a town hall since 2013 in some parts of his district.

Some 600 people attended the town hall in The Dalles, 1,000 turned out in Hood River, 600 in Prineville, 3,000 in Bend, 700 in Grants Pass and 1,000 in Medford. The town halls were scheduled to be two hours, but often stretched into three- and four-hour sessions of Oregonians voicing their dissatisfaction with Congressman Walden's position on health care, tax reform, immigration, and a host of other issues. One woman stated that she had voted for Walden in every election because she believed he was a moderate, and now understands he has moved too far right and will not receive her vote again.

My hat is off to the congressman for having the courage to attend the town halls, giving Oregonians time to voice their grievances. But his rise to power in the Republican Party has pulled him further and further away from the center, where his constituents are. His town hall attendance approaching 7,000 should give the Congressman pause. For years, he has operated under the radar, receiving 60-65 percent of the vote in his elections. His continued support of President Trump and an ultra-conservative agenda may just create an opening for an upset in 2018 or 2020.

This week's town halls leads one to believe that Oregon, like the rest of America, isn't hard right or left but in the middle. A moderate candidate with a strong middle-class economic message could give Congressman Walden a difficult time in his re-election bid.

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

OPEN FORUM

A bully is not a leader — just a bully

To the Editor:

Your April 7 article "Trump's NAFTA draft re-write changes little" proves how little the AFL-CIO, let alone much of the country besides, understands what is happening with the T***p regime. Note: it's not a presidency — it's a regime. Anyone who thinks T***p promised something in his campaign and can somehow be reminded and persuaded to keep his promises is utterly deluded. And what about Steve Bannon saying he wants to deconstruct the administrative state? Is our government one of laws or of men? We as a country are in collective denial about what is being done to our country in the name of democracy. We still cannot seem to fully comprehend that our electors have essentially enabled a functional coup d'etat.

Moreover, we need to all admit that the highest office of the land is not occupied by a rational human being. We need to acknowledge that because this selfish, bigoted narcissist is "president," he is effectively leading all manner of opportunists to believe that they are now free to do whatever they want, no matter how reprehensible. How can we not recognize that this man and his cabinet are corporate kleptocrats of the lowest order, who seem to think that they can just dismember our federal government and our country, sell off the pieces, and pocket the money? Do you really think it is reasonable for us taxpayers to pay millions upon millions of dollars so T***p's wife can live in New York and T***p himself can fly to Florida whenever he wants to play golf? That is not govern-

ment. That is abuse of power.

And now that T***p is flinging bombs all over the place, with no oversight or permission from Congress, he has become a clear and present danger to the safety of the entire world. He clearly thinks he's in the lead in a game of "last man standing," and he is determined to be that last standing man.

A bully is not a leader — just a bully. T***p needs to be led out of the White House in a straitjacket, and Steve Bannon needs to be convicted of treason.

And for crying out loud, stop printing T***p's picture! We know what he looks like, and we're tired of seeing his snarling, bellowing face.

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