

UNION DEMOCRACY

AFT-Oregon holds convention in Portland

As another anti-union case heads to the U.S. Supreme Court, priority will be shoring up support from represented workers

The statewide convention of American Federation of Teachers (AFT)-Oregon drew 150 delegates from 17 locals to the Portland Hilton April 21-23. AFT-Oregon has grown in recent years and now counts over 9,000 members.

But the union is working to shore up support among represented workers, in anticipation of a U.S. Supreme Court ruling. About 4,000 workers represented by AFT-Oregon aren't members and pay only partial "fair share" dues to cover the costs of bargaining. Those payments could become illegal nationwide if the Supreme Court rules as expected in a case called *Janus vs. AFSCME*. Last year, the court deadlocked over a very similar case, but last month's confirmation of Neil Gorsuch means that an anti-union decision in *Janus* could be only 12 to 18 months away.

Several locals were singled out for praise for success sign-



Convention delegates — including members of AFT Local 4671 (Hillsboro Classified United) above — took a recess April 22 in order to participate in the March for Science.

ing up new members in the last year, including Local 111 (Portland Federation of School Professionals), which gained 224 members; Local 3209 (United Academics of the University of Oregon), which added 129 new members; and Local 4671 (Hillsboro Classified United) which added 108.

Delegates reelected David

Rives to a fifth two-year term as AFT-Oregon president. Owing to term-limits in the union constitution, it will be his final term. Also elected to terms beginning July 1 were:

- **Belinda Reagan**, executive VP
- **Jaime Rodriguez**, VP for political action
- **Devin Hunter**, secretary
- **Jeff Grider**, treasurer

Photo by Andrew Gorry, courtesy of AFT-Oregon

State Letter Carriers gear up to defend door-to-door delivery

About 150 delegates representing two dozen locals came together in Bend April 21-23 for a convention of the Oregon State Association of Letter Carriers.

They heard from national officers, took part in workshops on stress management and on how to contend with automation and a new "performance enhancement tool" (speed-up) being implemented by postal management. But more than anything else, they focused on national legislation pending in Congress. "As federal employees, we're pretty vulnerable," said state association vice president Willie Groshell. "Everything we've got can be taken away with a stroke of the pen by Congress."

House Resolution 756, the Postal Service Reform Act of 2017, passed the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee on March 16. The bill includes a number of union-supported measures to shore up the finances of the Postal Service, but it also phases out door-to-door mail delivery, replacing it with centralized or cluster mailbox delivery. That could eliminate 80,000 letter carrier

jobs, and make the mail much less convenient for the public.

Postal unions are rallying behind a non-binding countermeasure, House Resolution 28, which urges the Postal Service to take all appropriate measures to ensure the continuation of door delivery for all business and residential customers. That bill has 223 co-sponsors — more than half of the 435 members of the U.S. House of Representatives; sponsors include all four Oregon Democrats, and Southwest Washington Republican Jaime Herrera-Beutler, but not Oregon Republican Greg Walden.

Convention delegates approved a resolution calling on each local to appeal to city councils and other local governments to pass resolutions calling for preservation of door to door delivery.

Delegates also elected officers, including:

- **Ricky Horton**, president
- **Willie Groshell**, vice president
- **Richard Strahm**, secretary-treasurer
- **Kollin Luman**, assistant secretary-treasurer
- **Mary Hackbart**, director of retirees

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Sewer pipe scuttles Oregon AFL-CIO plan to turn HQ into worker housing

The Oregon AFL-CIO is pulling the plug on plans to redevelop its Portland headquarters as a mixed-use affordable housing project.

The plan, conceived last spring, was for union pension funds to finance a four- or five-story union-built project combining office space with underground parking and up to 120 units of affordable housing — helped by a public subsidy in the form of a Low-Income Housing Tax Credit. The development was to replace the current headquarters on its 0.78-acre property just south of Powell Boulevard. The statewide labor federation formed a committee last June to explore the plan.

And it might have worked, except for one obstacle: The discovery of a 50-inch sewer

pipe running diagonally across the property. That meant the development would have to consist of two smaller buildings instead of one large building, and at that point, maintaining enough parking to meet the needs of the Oregon AFL-CIO would have greatly increased project costs.

The Oregon AFL-CIO headquarters, known as the Oregon Labor Center, is a busy hub of activity, frequently used by union and community groups for meetings and events, and the parking made available by its 20,000-square-foot parking lot is vital to those uses.

With help from the Housing Development Center, a Portland nonprofit, the committee then explored the fea-

sibility of partnering with the Portland Housing Bureau to bring in additional funding. But the Bureau is already developing a lot two blocks away where the Safari strip club now sits. The Bureau offered that the Oregon AFL-CIO could share space and ownership in that development, but it still would have fallen short of the labor federation's parking needs. And it would have left the state federation in the position of junior partner in the development. As Oregon AFL-CIO president Tom Chamberlain put it: "We wouldn't be masters of our own destiny."

For all those reasons, the Oregon AFL-CIO Executive Committee resolved April 21 to put the plan on ice.

UNIONIZATION → MAR-APR 2017

The following are Oregon and Southwest Washington workplaces where workers have decided whether to be represented by a union. The thumbs-up symbol means workers will be union-represented. The information comes from the National Labor Relations Board and the Oregon Employment Relations Board.

Union election results

Employer (Location) Union	Yes-No	
Koontz Machine & Welding (Coos Bay) Machinists District Lodge W24	2-0	👍
■ 2 dry dock workers		
Immigration Counseling Service (Portland) NOLSW (UAW Local 2320)	13-0	👍
■ 13 staff attorneys, paralegals, legal assistants, and other non-professional employees		
PeaceHealth Laboratories (Springfield and Eugene) SEIU Local 49	73-21	👍
■ 120 lab assistants and data entry specialists		

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