

# NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

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## WORKERS' RIGHTS

# TriMet Lift fires a driver for answering the call of nature

By Don McIntosh

Portlander Teresa Stevens was fired Aug. 21 from her job as a driver for TriMet LIFT — for urinating in a parking lot.

Drivers of all kinds will be able to relate to her predicament. Stevens says on June 18 she was driving her TriMet LIFT wheelchair-assisted minibus. She was trying to find the Tigard church where she was supposed to pick up her next disabled passenger when she felt an urgent need to urinate. Stevens says she had no money in her pocket for a customers-only restroom at a nearby Burger King. Desperate, she pulled into the empty parking lot of a corporate office park, got out, and squatted next to her bus. At 4 p.m. on a Sunday, she didn't think there would be witnesses.

But an office worker was watching from inside, took a picture with her smartphone, texted it to her boss, and posted it to Facebook. Her boss called the property manager to complain. The property manager called TriMet to complain. And TriMet called First Transit, Inc., the outside contractor that runs



Teresa Stevens

TriMet LIFT service.

Two days later, Stevens' manager called her into the office to confront her. She admitted what she'd done. He suspended her. It turned out to be her last day of work.

On June 21, KOIN 6 TV News determined that this vitally important story was worth a segment on the nightly news, and sent reporter Lisa Balick to the Scholls Business Center parking lot where Stevens had urinated three days previously. The TV news segment opened with the Facebook photo, driver's face blurred, and left viewers the impression that a male driver had

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## TRADE

# Trump does NAFTA

**NAFTA is not a failed trade agreement.** Written by and for the benefit of corporate elites, the North American Free Trade Agreement is a resounding success — for them. It succeeded in doing what it was intended to do: make Mexico safer for U.S. and Canadian investors, and lock in opportunities for big companies to sell back and forth between Mexico, the United States and Canada, tariff-free. That's why NAFTA is still so popular on the pages of *Wall Street Journal*. If the U.S. has unending trade deficits with Mexico, if 850,000 U.S. manufacturing jobs have been lost, if millions of Mexican farmers have been uprooted by American ag exports, it's not because NAFTA failed; it's because it succeeded. It's the corporate elites who failed — failed to show any concern for the well-being of the working people of the United States, Mexico, and Canada.

But that's not the line you'll hear from President Donald Trump as he undertakes a quick fix of the 23-year-old agreement. Trump's narrative is that

### What's the view like two blocks away from the White House?

What does the national AFL-CIO think about Trump renegotiating NAFTA? We talk to the labor federation's top trade expert on **PAGE 3**

NAFTA is an agreement between competing national interests in which wily Mexican negotiators outfoxed incompetent American negotiators. That narrative should be shelved in the fiction section. But understandably, Trump's persistent criticism of NAFTA was music to the ears of American voters who feel rightly betrayed by their nation's trade policy.

Now he just has to deliver.

On May 18, Trump's trade czar Robert Lighthizer gave formal notice to Congress that the president would begin negotiations with Canada and Mexico. The first round of talks took place behind closed doors in Washington, D.C. Aug. 15-20. The second round will take place in Mexico Sept. 1-5, followed by a third round in Canada later in September.

If and when any agreement is reached, we'll definitely want

to read the fine print.

The White House published its official objectives for the NAFTA renegotiations on July 17. Trump talked repeatedly about slapping 35 percent tariffs on imports, but his Administration's NAFTA goals summary says the United States wants to "maintain existing reciprocal duty-free market access." Other goals include elimination of "burdensome restrictions of intellectual property," and "greater regulatory compatibility." There's no mention of eliminating NAFTA Chapter 11, which lets foreign investors sue governments in private courts to overturn regulations they feel are unnecessarily burdensome.

"I think what we're seeing out of Trump is a guy who's anxious to look like he's lived up to campaign promises," says Russell Lum, director of the union-backed Oregon Fair Trade Campaign. "He got elected on blue collar votes because he trashed NAFTA in campaign speeches. Now he feels cornered into renegotiating it, but he's surrounded by people who benefit from the status quo."

— Don McIntosh

## UNION DEMOCRACY

# Building Trades back Gov. Brown for re-election

LINCOLN CITY — Oregon Gov. Kate Brown was endorsed by the Oregon State Building Trades Council in her bid for re-election in 2018. The endorsement took place at the Council's annual convention Aug. 23-26. The 60 delegates in attendance also endorsed Val Hoyle for labor commissioner, they heard reports from representatives of the Port of Portland, Jordan Cove, NuScale Power, and Vancouver Energy about upcoming projects worth multiple billions of dollars, and they

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## HURRICANE HARVEY

In response to catastrophic flooding in the Houston area, countless volunteers from the labor movement are assisting at shelters and other locations. The Texas AFL-CIO is asking union members to contribute to the Texas Workers Relief Fund, a charitable fund overseen by the Texas AFL-CIO that provides direct help to families in need.

[texasaflcio.org/donate](http://texasaflcio.org/donate)