

# NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

(International Standard Serial Number 0894-444X)

Established in 1900 in Portland, Oregon as a voice of the labor movement. Published on a semi-monthly basis on the first and third Fridays of each month by the Oregon Labor Press Publishing Co. Inc., a non-profit mutual benefit corporation owned by 20 unions and councils including the Oregon AFL-CIO. Serving more than 120 union organizations in Oregon and Southwest Washington.

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Printed on recycled paper, using soy-based inks, by members of Teamsters Local 747-M.

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PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID AT PORTLAND, OREGON.

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS P.O. BOX 13150 PORTLAND, OR 97213-0150



# ...Void where prohibited? At TriMet it could cost your job

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defecated in the parking lot. Balick and TV anchor Jeff Gianola told the story from the perspective of the outraged office worker, who presumably has access to a workplace restroom. They expressed no sympathy for the unnamed driver.

Stevens' union, however, defended her. An officer of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 757 represented her in a disciplinary hearing. Labor's Community Service Agency, a union-sponsored charity for union members in hardship, helped pay her rent. And Local 757's communication department gave Stevens the chance to tell her side of the story in a video the union published on YouTube July 28.

After two paycheck-free months, Stevens was formally terminated on Aug. 21.

"You urinated on the ground next to your vehicle," First Transit said in her termination letter. That's "a Class 1 infraction" the letter explained — "illegal, immoral or indecent behavior."

Local 757 has filed a grievance protesting the termination. Because it's a human rights issue, says Local 757 vice presi-



**THE ULTIMATE PORT-A-POTTY?** Yes, that's ATU Local 757 VP Jon Hunt, and yes, he's holding a toilet next to a TriMet bus. Retiree Bob Cummings is shooting a series of videos to publicize the union's "Pee in Peace" campaign highlighting inadequate restroom breaks and facilities, a major issue for drivers.

Photo by Andrew Riley

dent Jon Hunt, Stevens' fellow union members may be willing to take her case all the way to binding arbitration.

"What's the message to this group: Go in your pants or you're going to be terminated?" Hunt asked.

Taking bathroom breaks is a perennial challenge for professional drivers of all kinds. It's a problem for TriMet bus operators, Hunt says, and even more so for TriMet LIFT drivers, who may not be able to leave vulnerable passengers unattended. Even as Local 757 is fighting to

get Stevens' job back, one of her co-workers is facing termination after more than 15 years of work at TriMet LIFT — for urinating in a bottle on or next to a bus.

Stevens' grievance is against First Transit, but Hunt is convinced First Transit was told by TriMet to fire Stevens. Even as it was terminating her from TriMet LIFT, First Transit offered her a position in its school bus division.

Stevens declined the offer. She loved helping disabled individuals get around, and after two and a half years, she'd been

earning \$17.77 an hour plus benefits, and working up to 60 hours a week.

Like Hunt, Stevens thinks she was fired because she embarrassed TriMet.

"You think they were embarrassed?" Stevens told the Labor Press. "How do you think I felt?"

TriMet spokesperson Tia York wouldn't say whether a TriMet manager directed that Stevens be fired, but explained agency policy in an emailed statement: "LIFT operators are allowed to take comfort breaks outside regular break times, but for safety and security reasons, they are required to first contact dispatch. If the operator finds herself in an unfamiliar area, dispatch will guide her to a location where she can utilize the restroom at no cost. The operator in this situation did not contact dispatch to request a comfort break before stopping her vehicle and relieving herself in a parking lot."

### IN HER OWN WORDS

Teresa Stevens tells her own story in a union video published on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/8CV0wFj2Duo>

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