

WASHINGTON

Cowlitz County commissioner cancels presentation by anti-union Freedom Foundation

KELSO, Washington — A Cowlitz County commissioner has cancelled a proposed hearing about opening union negotiating sessions up to the public. The county negotiates collective bargaining agreements with nine labor unions, and those talks customarily take place in private session. Last month, Commissioner Arne Mortensen invited the anti-

union Freedom Foundation to make a case to the county commission on Sept. 26 in favor of a resolution to open negotiations to the public. But after union members and community supporters demanded equal time to counter the group, Mortensen decided to cancel the Sept. 26 meeting, citing an urgent need to work on the county budget as justification.

“This should have never been scheduled in the first place,” said Shawn Nyman, president of the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Central Labor Council in an official statement. “There is absolutely no reason to set our local family wage earners up for attack by this anti-labor group invited by the commissioner.”

HEALTH CARE

Merkley co-sponsors Medicare for All legislation

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Oregon U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley became one of six Senate co-sponsors when Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont introduced Medicare for All legislation Sept. 13.

Meanwhile, in the U.S. House of Representatives, 117 House Democrats have so far signed on as co-sponsors of a companion bill, HR 676, including Oregon’s Earl Blumenauer, Suzanne Bonamici, and Peter DeFazio.

The United States already has a “single payer” publicly-sponsored health insurance

program, but you have to be at least 65 or disabled to get it: It’s called Medicare. Sanders’ bill would expand Medicare to all Americans. When Congress passed Medicare in 1965, it was seen as a first step towards universal health care.

Announcing his co-sponsorship, Merkley said he has heard from many Oregonians about the importance of simplifying the fragmented health care system to ensure that no Americans fall through the cracks.

“Health care should be a right for every single American, not a privilege reserved for

the healthy and the wealthy,” he said. “Right now, our health care system is incredibly complex, fragmented, and stressful. It would be terrific to have a simple, seamless system where, solely by virtue of living in America, you know that you will get the care you need.”

Medicare for All appears to have majority public support: a June Kaiser Foundation poll found that 53 percent now favor a single-payer health plan in which all Americans would get their insurance from a single government plan.

UNION ORGANIZING

Machinists win the right to union election for welders at Precision Castparts

At Precision Castparts, 102 Portland-area welders have an opportunity to join the International Association of Machinists in a Sept. 22 vote on unionization.

Lawyers for Precision Castparts tried to block such an election, arguing that the union vote ought to include Precision Castparts’ entire 2,000-plus local production and maintenance workforce. Workers in that group as a whole rejected unionization by about a 4 to 3

margin four years ago. But National Labor Relations Board regional director Ronald Hooks ruled Aug. 28 that the welders would constitute an appropriate bargaining unit on their own, and therefore the election can take place.

If a majority of the welders vote to join the Machinists, it would be the first union organizing win at one of the Portland area’s largest nonunion industrial employers.

Eugene Urgent Care clinic network fights union campaign by SEIU Local 49

At ICCO, LLC, which owns a network of medical clinics in the Eugene area, the results of an Aug. 17 unionization election won’t be determined until the National Labor Relations Board decides what to do about 11 workers whose eligibility to vote was challenged.

Of the ballots that were counted, a slight majority of 72-70 favored joining Service Employees International Union

(SEIU) Local 49.

Local 49 spokesperson Rae Dunnaville said workers want a union in order to win raises, adequate paid time off, quality affordable healthcare and a voice on the job.

Company management opposed the union effort, and held several mandatory and optional worker meetings with an anti-union agenda.

UNIONIZATION → JULY-AUG 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. Thumbs-down means they’ll be on their own. The information comes from the National Labor Relations Board and the Oregon Employment Relations Board.

Union election results

Employer (Location) Union	Yes-No	
PeaceHealth Peace Harbor (Florence) SEIU Local 49	78-72	👍
▪ 185 CNAs, cooks, lab assistants, clerical and other support staff		
Albertsons (Ontario) UFCW Local 368-A	2-4	👎
▪ 6 deli clerks		
Eugene Urgent Care (Eugene) SEIU Local 49	72-70	?
▪ 160 CNAs, LPNs, and support staff at 13 Eugene-area clinics owned by ICCO, Inc.		
City of Brookings Brookings Police Assn. vs. Teamsters Local 223	15-0-0	
▪ 15 police officers voted to disaffiliate with Teamsters and join an independent union		
City of Gervais (Gervais) Gervais Police Officers Association	4-0	👍
▪ 4 police officers formerly represented by Laborers Local 483		



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