

NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

IN THIS ISSUE

PARDON OUR DUST A \$45 million remodel of Westmoreland Union Manor is complete. | Page 6

BALLET DANCERS UNITE! Keller Auditorium is now wall-to-wall union. | Page 8

Meeting Notices p. 4 In Memoriam: Norm Malbin p. 7

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IN THE AFTERMATH OF HURRICANE MARIA:

Union volunteers mobilize for Puerto Rico

Six Oregon nurses join 300 other union members for a two-week stint in the hurricane's wake

By Don McIntosh

By night they slept on army cots in a baseball stadium. By day, they brought medical attention to stricken communities. Six Kaiser Permanente nurses are back in Portland after spending two weeks in Puerto Rico with 300 other union volunteers from around the country — helping residents cope with the aftermath of a Category 5 hurricane.

Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico Sept. 20 with winds of up to 155 miles per hour. It battered the island for more than 30 hours, dropping up to 37 inches of rain — as much as Houston got over three days from Hurricane Harvey. The electric grid was devastated, leaving Puerto Rico's entire population of 3.4 million without power. Roads were out, and communications were down, with up to 85 per-



Union nurses from Oregon, ready for takeoff at Newark International Airport. From left: Maureen Upton, Katherine Salinas, Andreana Gentile, Susan Gillispie, Misty Richards, and Tammie Tally-Ingrao (front).

cent of the island's cell towers out of service. Several million people were without access to safe drinking water.

Six days after the hurricane, labor leaders in Puerto Rico set up a phone call between the mayor of San Juan and national

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. Trumka called Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants union, and she called the CEO of United Airlines. They worked

Turn to Page 2

IN MEMORIAM

Nellie Fox-Edwards, a pioneer for women in labor

Dec. 15, 1923 — Oct. 6, 2017

Oregon lost a working woman's hero Oct. 6 with the passing of labor leader Nellie Fox-Edwards at age 93. Hers was a life spent championing the rights of women, union workers, and the mentally ill.

Nellie Fox opened the door for women in the labor movement in 1975 when she was elected director of political education and legislation for the Oregon AFL-CIO. At the time, she was the highest elected woman union official in the United States.

She was a founder of the Oregon Pioneer Chapter of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), and she served as president of the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association.

Fox-Edwards got her start in the labor movement working as a clerk at a downtown Portland jewelry store, which was repre-



Nellie Fox-Edwards with Oregon AFL-CIO officer Rosie McDonald.

sented by Retail Clerks Local 1257 (now part of United Food and Commercial Workers Local

555). She became active in the local and in 1962 was appointed a

Turn to Page 7

NATIONAL

Trump/GOP tax plan: Cut taxes on the rich

The proposal would slash the corporate tax rate from 35 to 20 percent and end the estate tax on the biggest fortunes

How bad is it? Here's what the GOP plan would do:

- Slash the corporate tax rate from 35% to 20%
- Cut or eliminate taxes multinational corporations pay on their offshore profits
- Eliminate the estate tax, which is only levied on estates worth more than \$5.5 million (the top 0.2%)
- Eliminate the alternative minimum tax, which limits the use of loopholes by high income taxpayers to avoid taxes
- Lower the top tax rate from 39.6% to 35% on the highest incomes
- Raise the tax rate for those in the lowest income bracket from 10% to 12%.
- End the tax deduction that individuals get for the state and local taxes they pay
- Reduce the top individual tax rate from 39.6% to 25% for hedge fund managers, real estate developers and law firms

“A con game.” That’s what AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka called the new tax plan President Trump and Republican Congressional leaders released Sept. 27.

“And working people are the ones they’re trying to con,” Trumka said. “Here we go again. First comes the promise that tax giveaways for the wealthy and big corporations will trickle down to the rest of us. Then comes the promise that tax cuts will pay for themselves. Then comes the promise that they want to stop offshoring.”

HEALTH CARE

Medicare-for-all: The time has come

The proposal has record support in Congress and in polls

By Don McIntosh

When Medicare passed Congress in 1965, its authors thought it would be the first step toward universal national health insurance. Medicare is the public health insurance program that covers Americans 65 and older. It's sponsored by the federal government and paid for with payroll taxes, general revenues, and participant premiums — currently \$134 a month for most enrollees. Medicare negotiates with health care providers over prices, to limit costs.

But proposals to expand it to all Americans have fared poorly in Congress. Democratic Congressman John Conyers of Michigan has intro-

duced a “Medicare for All” bill in every session of Congress since 2003, but it has never made it out of committee. When then-Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.) held a 2009 hearing on the bill that later became the Affordable Care Act (ACA), he barred any discussion of a universal program.

ACA greatly expanded Medicaid (the state-administered federal health insurance program for the poor), and it created state-level exchanges for otherwise uninsured individuals to purchase coverage with the help of income-dependent subsidies and tax credits. But four years after the exchanges opened for business, 28 million Americans are still without health insurance, and premiums continue to rise.

Turn to Page 3