

# NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

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## UNION DEMOCRACY

# National AFL-CIO convention

Over 1,200 delegates, alternates and guests gathered in St. Louis, Missouri, Oct. 22-25 for the national AFL-CIO's 28th Constitutional Convention. The convention is held every four years to elect officers and adopt policy resolutions.

The AFL-CIO isn't a union. It's a federation of 56 national and international labor unions that represent 12.5 million American workers in total. The AFL-CIO includes almost every national union except the Carpenters, National Education Association, Teamsters, Service Employees International Union, and International Longshore and Warehouse Union.

Breaking with past practice, this time AFL-CIO declined to invite any national politicians to address the convention. That — and a resolution passed on Day 3 of the convention — were meant to communicate the need for labor to be politi-



Convention delegates unanimously re-elected Richard Trumka (Mine Workers) as president, Liz Shuler (Electrical Workers) as secretary-treasurer and Tefere Gebre (United Food and Commercial Workers) as executive vice president of the AFL-CIO. In addition, delegates elected 55 vice presidents who will serve as the Executive Council for a four-year term. Shuler is a member of Portland-based IBEW #125.

cally independent of the two major parties.

The convention also emphasized racial equity and inclusion. That was the subject of a pre-convention day of workshops, and attendees got to witness the exclusion of Black Americans firsthand: Bruce

Franks, Jr., a young Black state representative from St. Louis, was invited to speak to the pre-convention gathering Oct. 21, but was refused entry by convention center security officers,

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## COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

# Strike at Lane County

Lane County employees represented by AFSCME Local 2831 went on strike for a week before reaching agreement on a new three-year contract. The bargaining unit totaled 692 workers, including 80 nurses and 110 probationary and temporary workers. They walked off the job Wednesday, Oct. 18 and returned to work Wednesday, Oct. 25. The strike caused county health clinics and dumps to close. Strikers picketed at nine locations.

Workers struck chiefly over county proposals on pay and health care, said Oregon AFSCME spokesperson Ross Grami. A county pay study showed that members were making on average 15 percent below their peers at comparable public employers, Grami said, but Lane County rejected a union proposal to raise wages 14.8 percent. And the county's health insurance proposal required employees to contribute for the first time toward the health insurance premium — \$20 to \$70 a month, plus increased copays and deductibles.

In the settlement, which was ratified Oct. 27, members agreed in the end to the county health insurance proposal, though the county agreed to delay the start date for health insurance payments to July 1.



The contract also provides a 3 percent raise in the first year, and 2 percent in second and third years. A joint labor-management committee will review wages of some employees mid-way through the contract.

## NATIONAL

# GOP tax plan sparks major backlash

By Don McIntosh

For four decades, while wages have stagnated for American working people, the incomes and accumulated wealth of the top 1 percent — and the top tenth of 1 percent — have become so untethered from the rest of the country that America is today witnessing the birth of a new aristocracy of inherited wealth. What do Republicans in Congress propose to do about that? Abolish the estate tax on the estates of the wealthy, and cut taxes massively on the rich and corporations.

As of press time, details of the still-evolving tax-cutting plan were being kept secret even from fellow Republicans in Congress. But based on the GOP framework released Sept. 27, 80 percent of the tax cuts

would go to the top 1 percent of income taxpayers, and the top tenth of a percent would get an average tax cut of over \$1 million a year. Meanwhile, nearly one third of households earning between \$50,000 and \$150,000 would see a tax increase due to the repeal of personal exemptions and deductions.

In an Oct. 26 speech in the Senate, Oregon's Ron Wyden, ranking Democrat on the tax-writing Senate Finance Committee, called it “a feast for the ultra-wealthy” in which the middle class is on the menu.

“This debate is coming,” Wyden warned. “It's going to happen at the speed of light. The whole process could be over before anybody has put a dent in their holiday shopping, but that's

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## OREGON

# Tax on hospitals and insurers will go to voters in January

To preserve Medicaid funding, Oregon AFL-CIO urges yes vote

Three Republican legislators who oppose new Oregon taxes on hospitals and insurance companies have collected enough signatures to put the law before voters in a Jan. 23, 2018 special election. House Bill 2391 was passed by the Legislature earlier this year to raise money that attracts federal Medicaid matching funds to pay for the Oregon Health Plan.

It will be Measure 101 on the ballot. A “yes” vote keeps the taxes — 6 percent on hospital net revenue, and 1.5 percent on health insurance premiums — are forecast to raise \$670 million in the next two years.

Labor organizations urging a yes vote include Oregon AFL-CIO, American Federation of

Teachers-Oregon, Oregon AFSCME, Oregon Education Association, Oregon Federation of Nurses and Healthcare Professionals, Oregon Nurses Association, Oregon School Employees Association, and Service Employees Locals 49 and 503. They're joined by more than 50 community, civil rights, and non-profit organizations.

The effort to overturn the law is led by State Reps. Sal Esquivel (R-Medford), Julie Parrish (R-West Linn) and Cedric Hayden (R-Fall Creek).

Oregon has relied on the so-called “provider tax” on hospitals to fund the Oregon Health Plan since 2004, but the insurance tax is new.

### ONLINE PLEDGE

Oregon AFL-CIO is asking Oregonians to sign an online pledge to vote yes on Measure 101 <http://bit.ly/2yS9PJL>