

NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

IN THIS ISSUE

UNION-MADE GIFT GUIDE: Yes, you can still fill a stocking and put some solidarity under the tree | Page 6

NO MADE-IN-MEXICO OREOS: Outside a Portland Walmart, Nabisco Boycott Day of Action. | Page 2

Meeting notices p. 4

Trump's NAFTA talks p.7

VOLUME 118, NUMBER 23

PORTLAND, OREGON

DECEMBER 1, 2017

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

At Volunteers of America, still no contract

The publicly funded non-profit adopts a 'right-to-work' stance

More than a year after workers at the Oregon chapter of Volunteers of America (VOA) voted 46 to 3 to join Oregon AF-SCME, they still don't have a first union contact. The roughly 65 workers staff two residential alcohol and drug treatment facilities in Portland where addicts undergo six months of court-ordered treatment.

VOA executive director Kay Toran has opposed the union from the beginning. She hired lawyers, and tried but failed to talk workers out of unionizing. Then to represent VOA in contract bargaining she brought in Jim Frazer, a negotiator associated with many bitter labor disputes over the last few decades. In bargaining sessions, Frazer refers to VOA as "the company."



NO CONTRACT, NO PEACE Before heading into another fruitless bargaining session, union drug treatment manager Vialante Vieira took part in a rainy 8 a.m. picket Nov. 22 outside Volunteers of America offices in Southeast Portland.

"That shows he really doesn't understand the difference between non-profit mission and a for-profit company," says Oregon AFSCME Executive Director Stacy Chamberlain, who heads the union bargain-

ing team.

In bargaining, VOA has adopted a "right-to-work" posture: Insisting that the bargaining unit be an open shop, in

Turn to Page 8

UNION ORGANIZING

New Seasons rebuffs call for meeting with union

UFCW Local 555 says the nonunion grocer has already fired one union supporter

By Don McIntosh

The right of workers to speak to the CEO is a "sacred value" at New Seasons Market, CEO Wendy Collie wrote to employees. Yet Collie, a former Starbucks executive, has so far snubbed a group of workers who asked for a meeting. Supporters of the brand-new New Seasons Workers United union visited corporate headquarters Nov. 1 to present a letter and petition signed by 260 New Seasons workers asking her to agree to principles of neutrality — and to call United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 555 Organizing Director Peter Diaz by Nov. 21 to set up a meeting.



FIRED FOR BACKING A UNION? The National Labor Relations Board is investigating whether New Seasons deli worker Adrian Mendoza was unlawfully terminated.

Collie didn't give pro-union workers the courtesy of a reply, but she did react later that day — with a letter posted in stores. The letter asserts that "speaking up" is "a value we hold dear."

"You're welcome to talk di-

Turn to Page 3



ON STRIKE FOR LIVING WAGES AND AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE: Striking New System laundry workers Phung Nguyen, Tram Nguyen and Yim Chin say they and their 70 coworkers can't get by on minimum wage.

Pushed to the limit, laundry workers strike

After more than 20 years laundering linens for Portland's top hotels and restaurants, Yim Chin makes \$11.75 an hour at New System Laundry, a city-block-sized industrial facility at Northeast 10th and Flanders. Next year, the Portland-area minimum wage will surpass that union-negotiated wage, which was set in 2013 when the statewide minimum was \$8.95.

But in negotiations with Service Employees Local 49, New System is proposing to pay no more than the new minimum wage — and to double what she and her 70 co-workers pay toward union-sponsored health insurance premiums, from \$105 a month to \$213 a month by 2020.

"Because our wages are so low, if they raise the premium, we can't make it," Chin says.



Local 49 Representative Melissa Espinosa says the company hasn't claimed poverty; it just doesn't want to shoulder the premium increases and pay above minimum wage.

So on Nov. 28, a week after their contract expired, the overwhelmingly Vietnamese and Chinese workforce went out on strike. They remained on strike when this issue went to press.

NATIONAL



TOP 5 REASONS THE GOP BILL IS A JOB KILLER:

As this issue went to press, Republican leaders in the U.S. Senate were preparing to vote on a tax plan that favors the super-rich and corporations over working people. Here's why the AFL-CIO says the plan is a bad idea:

- **Millions of working people would pay more.** People making under \$40,000 would be worse off, on average, in 2021; and people making under \$75,000 would be worse off, on average, in 2027.
- **The super-rich and Wall Street would make out like bandits.** The richest 0.1% would get an average tax cut of more than \$208,000, and 62% of the benefits of the Senate bill would go to the richest 1%. Big banks, hedge funds and other Wall Street firms would be the biggest beneficiaries of key provisions.
- **Tax breaks for outsourcing.** The Republican tax plan would lower the U.S.

tax rate on offshore profits to zero, giving corporations more incentive to move American jobs offshore.

- **Working people would lose health care.** Thirteen million people would lose health insurance, and premiums would rise 10% in the non-group market. Meanwhile, Republicans want to cut Medicaid and Medicare by \$1.5 trillion — the same price tag as their tax bill.
- **Job-killing cuts to infrastructure and education.** Eliminating the deduction for state and local taxes would drastically reduce state and local investment in infrastructure and lead to \$350 billion in education cuts, jeopardizing the jobs of 350,000 educators.

If the vote hasn't happened yet when you read this, the AFL-CIO asks you to call your senators right away at 844-899-9913 and tell them to vote no.