

2017 in review

As chronicled in 24 issues of the Northwest Labor Press: some of the year's most important developments for labor and working people.

NATIONAL



Goodbye Barack Obama, hello Donald Trump

On Jan. 20, organized labor bid farewell to the Obama years, during which unions lost half a million members. Obama passed NAFTA-style trade deals with Korea, Panama and Colombia (which George W. Bush had negotiated), and “fast track” legislation to speed ratification of future NAFTA-style deals. Trump helped kill Obama’s Trans-Pacific Partnership, and removed obstacles to construction of the Dakota Access and Keystone XL pipelines. But it also became clear in 2017 that Trump appointees in the Department of Labor and the National Labor Relations Board are going to re-

verse Obama-era progress on an array of workers rights and safety regulations. Nearly a year in, his Administration’s biggest efforts have been to pass a massive tax cut for corporations and the wealthy, and a failed attempt to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act.

Right-to-work on the march

Kentucky and **Missouri** became so-called “right-to-work” states in 2017, banning any requirement that union-represented workers pay dues or fees to the union. In both states, the laws were passed by Republican legislators and signed by Republican governors, without any support from Democrats.

Next up in the “right-to-work” queue is an assault on public worker unions nationwide. In April, the Republican-majority Senate confirmed Trump nominee **Neil Gorsuch** to the U.S. Supreme Court. Gorsuch’s appointment is expected to have very far-reaching consequences for organized la-

bor. That’s because Gorsuch is considered very likely to tip the court into anti-union 5-4 decision in a pending case, *Janus v. AFSCME*, about whether union-represented public sector workers can be required to pay union dues or fees.



Strike at AT&T

The year’s biggest strike occurred in May, when 37,000 AT&T workers took part in three-day strike — the first-ever walkout for workers in the company’s wireless division.

The South stays nonunion

In February, **Boeing** workers in South Carolina said no to the

Machinists in a 2,097 to 731 vote. Then in August, workers at a **Nissan** plant in Mississippi said no to United Auto Workers in a 2,244 to 1,307 vote.

OREGON

‘Fair Work Week’ law

2017 was a year of significant labor wins in the Oregon Legislature, including first-in-the-nation labor legislation cracking down on abusive scheduling practices by employers. The new law will give retail, hospitality and food service workers predictable schedules — and extra pay when schedules change at the last minute. Other major wins included a long-overdue transportation funding package, and a law preventing local jurisdictions from passing antiunion “right-to-work” ordinances.

Biggest organizing win

At Springfield’s PeaceHealth Sacred Heart hospital, medical techs voted overwhelmingly to unionize. The new 350-member bargaining unit will be part of

Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals.

WASHINGTON

New state law will mandate paid family leave

Washington Legislature passed a paid family and medical leave law, which sets up a public insurance program funded by employers and employees to guarantee workers up to 12 weeks paid time off starting in 2020.

Election breaks deadlock

In November, Democrats retook a majority in the state Senate for the first time four years. And Washington State Labor Council Political Director Teresa Mosqueda won election to Seattle City Council.

Union deal for farmworkers

Farmworkers at the massive Sakuma Brothers berry farm ratified a historic first union contract in 2017. After a four-year strike and boycott campaign, 200 farmworkers will get \$15 an hour and job protections.



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