COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Shipyard workers reject Vigor contract offer

Shipyard workers at Vigor Industrial LLC in Portland and Puget Sound overwhelmingly rejected a three-year master contract proposal in voting held Jan. 15. The union bargaining team recommended passage.

The master agreement falls under the direction of the national Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO. Side agreements are bargained separately by the Metal Trades Council of Portland and Vicinity, the Puget Sound Metal Trades Council, and Boilermakers Local 104.

More than 1,000 employees at those locations have been working under the terms of an extended master agreement that expired Sept. 1, 2017. That deal was the result of an extension to side agreements with the respective metal trades councils that expired Nov. 30, 2016. The master contract's original expiration date was June 1, 2017.

Changes in health insurance plans with higher deductibles, and a "rolling 40" for overtime when called back from layoff during the week were key issues in workers rejecting the contract proposal, said Robert Petroff, a union rep for Machinists District Lodge W24.

At press time, no new bargaining dates had been set.

Metal trades craft unions represent workers at Vigor Marine Portland, Cascade General Portland, Washington Marine Repair Seattle, Vigor Marine Seattle, and Vigor Shipyard Seattle. Vigor Marine Portland and Vigor Marine Seattle operate as a single company.

Nearly a dozen craft unions are affiliated with the respective metal trades councils in Oregon and Washington. They include Plumbers and Fitters, Machinists, Electricians, Laborers, Painters, Operating Engineers, Teamsters, Sheet Metal Workers, Insulators, and Boilermakers.

... Bills Oregon lawmakers will consider

From Page 1

Here are some of the proposals they'll be following:

Paid family leave Federal law says companies with 50 or more employees must allow employees to take up to 12 weeks leave to care for a newborn or a family member or their own serious health condition. But workers often can't afford to use it. California, New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island have made the leave paid. Will Oregon join them? One proposal, to be taken up by state senator Kathleen Taylor (D-Portland), is to levy a small payroll tax to create a fund so folks could go on paid leave if have a kid or a close relative gets very sick.

Prescription drug prices State representative Rob Nosse (D-Portland), plans to introduce legislation to require pharmaceutical companies to give 60 days' notice if they want to raise the price of a drug more than 10 percent a year for drugs that cost more than $100 a month. They would also be required to give state regulators detailed explanations of the price hikes and their effects on healthcare costs. California passed a similar proposal last year.

More money for affordable housing Alissa Keny-Guyer (D-Portland) will sponsor a proposal to increase the real estate transaction recording fee to $75 (currently it's $35) to generate $112.5 million a year to build affordable housing.

Bargaining over class size A bill sponsored by State Rep. Brian Clem (D-Salem) would make class size a mandatory subject of bargaining in teachers union negotiations. Up to now, unions have wanted to negotiate limits to class size, but districts have often refused even to discuss it.

Cap and invest The most impactful proposal lawmakers will take up is the Clean Energy Jobs bill. See the separate article on Page 1 for details.

... Oregon Cap and invest?

From Page 1

nouncement that the United States will abandon commitments president Obama made at the Paris Climate Agreement, it's falling to state and local governments to take action on climate change.

Oregon's Clean Energy Jobs bill would create what proponents are calling a "cap-and-invest" program. It would set a cap on greenhouse gas emissions, issue permits for that amount of emissions, and auction off the permits. The amount of allowed emissions would shrink each year until 2050, at which point Oregon greenhouse gas emissions would be at least 80 percent lower than 1990 levels. The cap would only apply to fossil fuel importers and enterprises responsible for emitting the equivalent of 25,000 metric tons of CO2 emissions a year, about 100 companies in all. Emissions from agriculture and forestry operations wouldn't be covered; nor would marine and aviation fuels.

The bulk of the funds the program collects — 85 percent — would pay for things like building efficiency, electric grid improvements, fuel-efficient transportation, and projects that promote resiliency in forestry, agriculture, and coastal areas.

Unlike with previous versions of this proposal, representatives of organized labor were invited to take part in crafting the bill, and while it's not exactly as unions might have written it, the bill goes a long way to address concerns labor leaders raised about the potential for job loss and about the quality of the jobs the program would create.

For example, energy-intensive industries like paper mills and aluminum smelters that are exposed to foreign competition would be issued some allowances at no charge, which they could sell to fund energy efficiency improvements. Electric and gas utilities would also get allowances at no cost, and use the proceeds to reduce energy bills.

For any construction projects funded through the program, contractors will be required to participate in state-registered apprenticeship programs, and would have to have a history of compliance with all safety and labor laws. And state agencies administering funds could require the use of project labor agreements.

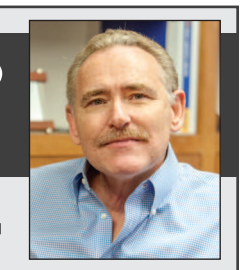
Any workers displaced by the program [and credible studies show there have been no job losses to date from a similar program in California] would get financial support including unemployment insurance and retraining and relocation assistance.

The proposal also mandates seats for labor union representatives on advisory committees that would oversee the program's implementation.

The program would start in 2021.

Who's on our side?

By Tom Chamberlain Oregon AFL-CIO President



Elections matter

Too often, folks are turned off by the political process. They are tired of the noise of the 24-hour news cycle. In an era when all one has to do is flip the channel to find Fox News pushing the conservative agenda or MSNBC for the leftist viewpoint, many have grown tired of the bickering between political parties and the failure to move anything but a corporate agenda in Congress. We often forget that elections do matter and our votes do count.

While many of us have been distracted by the president's daily tweets or if the Russians meddled in the 2016 election, many have not paid attention to an under-the-radar agenda to weaken workers' rights. And 2017 was a banner year for that agenda.

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) is the independent federal agency responsible for interpreting private sector collective bargaining and refereeing disputes between employers, unions and workers. President Trump's two appointments to the Board changed the majority of the Board from progressive to conservative. And they made short work of reversing many of the gains organized labor achieved under the Obama Administration.

In 2011, the NLRB's *Specialty Healthcare* decision paved the way for workers to organize smaller bargaining units within a larger workplace. For example, nursing assistants could create a bargaining unit to hold a union election without including all the facility's dietary aides, maintenance workers, or other employees. That decision has been reversed in 2017 under the new anti-union Board.

Employer legal teams have developed a strategy of delaying union elections by submitting an array of legal objections in an effort to slow down union elections, with the goal of draining union resources and organizing momentum. In 2015 the NLRB developed and implemented a rule allowing for union elections prior to a ruling on the employer objections. This shortened the timeframe for elections to a few weeks. On Dec. 13, 2017, the NLRB announced that they were reconsidering the expedited election rule.

Under the Obama Administration, the Department of Labor (DOL) issued a rule starting in December 2017 which raised the threshold for those eligible for overtime from $23,660 to $47,476 per year. The DOL rule expanded mandatory overtime to 4.2 million workers. The rule was necessary because many employers were misclassifying their workers to skirt paying overtime. Recently, the Department of Labor hinted that they will be reevaluating the rule.

Elections do matter. The Red Wave of the 2016 election ushered in so-called 'right-to-work' in Kentucky and Missouri, bringing the number of 'right-to-work' states to 28.

We now know that the corporate conservative agenda is about destroying the American union movement. Do not fool yourselves: Any state, including Oregon, is just an election away from 'right-to-work.'

2018 is not the time to retreat and disengage from the political process. Rather, it is a time to push back by electing strong, pro-union candidates, growing our pro-worker majorities in the state House and Senate, and reelecting Gov. Kate Brown.

The Oregon AFL-CIO and our affiliates will be on the doorstep and in the workplace talking and listening to workers and their families in our efforts to advance a pro-worker agenda in Oregon and in Washington, D.C. I hope we can count on you to join us.

The Oregon AFL-CIO is a 138,000-member-strong federation of labor unions.