

...Burgerville

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“It was a leftover cold piece of chicken,” Ceballos says. A Burgerville manager accused her of stealing it, and told her they had video evidence of her handling the chicken patty. Ceballos denies stealing it. She says she threw away a patty she believed belonged to a co-worker who’d forgotten about it and left work.

Portland’s labor market is tight these days. The official unemployment rate is down around 4.0 percent, the lowest in 18 years. So it can’t be easy for

Burgerville to find workers given that their starting wage is minimum wage. Yet company managers are terminating pro-union employees at an impressive clip.

Some restaurants have policies forbidding employees to eat food they haven’t paid for. But it’s extremely common — and one of the few perks of the low-wage food service industry — for employees to be allowed to consume food that’s otherwise going to waste. When your take-home pay is \$184 a week (half-time hours at Portland’s minimum wage), those extra calories help you get through the week.

It’s a violation of federal labor law for an employer to fire

a worker for their union sympathies, but the federal agency that enforces that law has an unimpressive record. Employees need the equivalent of a smoking gun to prove their union sympathies are what they were fired for. Even then it’s time-consuming to get resolution — and the law’s only remedy is reinstatement with back pay (minus any wages the worker earned in the meantime!)

Despite the firings, Burgerville Workers Union is continuing its fight. It’s calling on the public to boycott the company until it deals with the union. The boycott has been endorsed by 11 unions and by Oregon House Speaker Tina Kotek.

POLITICS

How union members could take charge of Democratic and Republican parties

Oregonians: Are you a union member and thinking about running for office? Great. Call the Oregon Labor Candidates School and get trained to campaign and win.

But if you don’t have that kind of time, there’s another way to push your party to stand up for working people: Become a Precinct Committee Person (PCP) for the Democratic or Republican parties.

When a vacancy occurs in the Oregon Legislature, it’s filled by appointment by county commissioners — from a list drawn up by PCPs. That happened six times just this year. That means PCPs are important.

But hardly anyone wants to

be one. PCPs are elected to two-year terms for each political precinct, and oftentimes there’s no one running. If you want to be a PCP, you’re almost guaranteed to win!

PCPs also attend state Central Committee meetings, vote on official party business, and elect the county party leadership and platform convention delegates.

The only requirement is that you be a registered member of the party in your precinct for a minimum of 180 days prior to filing.

But you have to apply, and the filing deadline is coming up fast: March 6. To apply, download and fill out the form at <http://bit.ly/2zU51AN> and turn it into your County elections office.

UNION SUPPORTERS FIRED AT BURGERVILLE



Arsenio Arnold, fired from the MLK store Jan. 30 (weeks after becoming a father) for smelling of cannabis, which, as he informed a manager when he was hired, he uses to combat seizures.



Canaan Schlesinger, fired from the MLK store Jan. 31 for using a dollop of soft serve ice cream instead of cream in his free coffee. Managers said he should have paid for the ice cream.



Michelle Ceballos, fired from the MLK Boulevard store Feb. 14 for theft of a chicken patty. Ceballos denies the charge, and says she threw away a patty she believed had been left behind by a co-worker.



Jordan Vaandering, fired from the Vancouver Plaza store January 2017 for failing to pay for a bagel and cream cheese. He says he was set up: An assistant manager gave it to him and didn’t ask payment.



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