

NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

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VOLUME 119, NUMBER 7

PORTLAND, OREGON

APRIL 6, 2018



Strike averted at Vigor shipyards

New four-year contract raises wages \$4.35 an hour and puts all Portland union members in low-cost Laborers health plan

Shipyard workers in Portland and the Puget Sound voted to ratify a new four-year multi-union contract with Vigor Marine on March 28, after previously turning down two contract offers and authorizing a strike. That's after Vigor

made significant improvements to its previous contract offer at a March 12 bargaining session attended by a federal mediator.

The new master agreement covers workers in 10 international unions at shipyards in Portland, Seattle and Port Angeles, Washington that are owned by subsidiaries of Vigor Industrial LLC. Currently the shipyards employ about 700 union members under Metal Trades Council master agree-

ments, but the numbers can swell by several hundred when bigger ship maintenance jobs come in.

The new agreement raises wages \$4.35 an hour across the board: \$1.05 upon ratification, followed by another \$1.05 on Dec. 1, 2018; \$1.10 on Dec. 1, 2019; and \$1.15 on Dec. 1, 2020.

It also goes some distance

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Kaiser union coalition splits in two

By Don McIntosh

Twenty-two local unions announced late in the day March 26 that they're quitting the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions (CKPU) and won't take part in the nation-wide bargaining that was scheduled to begin March 27 in Oakland, California.

The exit removes 45,000 union members from the coalition, with 70,700 members of 13 locals remaining.

The decision comes after months of tensions between many of the Coalition's smaller unions and its largest union, 46,000-member SEIU United Healthcare West (SEIU-UHW). SEIU-UHW wanted to have more say over Coalition decision-making, and on its own began to pursue a more confrontational strategy.

The unions leaving CKPU announced the formation of a new alliance "in the spirit of the original coalition and labor-



In the respiratory therapy department at Kaiser Sunnyside Medical Center, OFNHP members put on their union's "patient defender" buttons as part of a March 27 day of action in advance of contract negotiations.

management partnership." Dubbed the Alliance of Health Care Unions, it will be directed by Peter diCicco, a former president of the AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department who helped found the original Kaiser union coalition.

"We want to get back to a place of mutual respect, partnership, and consensus deci-

sion making," says registered nurse Adrienne Enghouse, president of Oregon Federation of Nurses and Healthcare Professionals (OFNHP, AFT Local 5017), one of the departing unions. OFNHP represents 3,400 Kaiser RNs, dental hygienists, medical technicians and health care professionals in

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STRIKE!

Could the red-state teacher walkouts herald a return of the long-forgotten strike?

By Don McIntosh

Are we witnessing the beginning of a strike wave? On April 2, school teachers in Oklahoma walked off the job statewide, shutting down 200 school districts and gathering 30,000 strong outside the state Capitol. The strike came after a decade in which Republican state lawmakers cut school funding dramatically, even as they reduced

taxes on top income earners and oil and gas firms. On the same day, teachers in Kentucky gathered at the state Capitol, furious about a law that cuts teacher pension benefits. Most of the Kentucky teachers were off for spring break, but teachers walked out and closed 20 school districts where school was scheduled. The Oklahoma and Kentucky strikes came the week after teachers in Arizona held a mass demonstration to demand a 20 percent pay increase and

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School bus drivers gathered March 23 outside a union contract bargaining session to make their voices heard by the Portland Public Schools negotiators. Among the chants: "We demand respect! Are you listening?"

Portland Public Schools bus drivers are speaking up

School bus drivers who transport students with disabilities and special needs are beginning to wonder what it's going to take to get a new union contract with Portland Public Schools. The unit of 107 drivers and dispatchers has been working for nine months under the terms of a contract that expired June 30, 2017.

They've been turning up at School Board meetings, and on March 23 even paraded with signs and chants outside the final regular bargaining session —

held at the offices of their union, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757.

Fair pay in high-cost Portland is the key issue. Teamster-represented truck drivers employed by the district to transport food start at \$21.32 an hour and rise to \$23.69 after six months. But school bus drivers employed by the district to transport special needs students start at \$16.25 an hour and reach the top rate

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