

...Volunteers of America Oregon presents anti-union 'final offer'

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profit. Having turned their lives around, they're passionate about the work they do. VOA workers unionized in part because chronically low and stagnant pay rates are contributing to high turnover at the facilities, which worsens outcomes and reduces the impact of the taxpayer investment in addiction recovery.

Because Oregon AFSCME has made significant concessions over the course of contract bargaining, the two sides are close to agreement on nearly everything else, but union security is a sticking point. Open shop is required by law in so-called "right-to-work" states in the South and Great Plains, but is less common in more unionized states like Oregon.

"These workers are standing strong because they know what 'right-to-work' would mean for their contract," said Oregon AFSCME Executive Director Stacy Chamberlain, who has led the union bargaining team since negotiations began in January 2017. "It's a testament to their deep understanding of what solidarity means that they're still



holding out."

VOA presented what it called its final offer at an April 25 bargaining session that was assisted by a mediator. Their offer is a 3.5-year agreement with no wage increase, no guarantee of future cost-of-living raises, no regular wage scale, and no union security.

VOA already gave a substan-

tial raise to one group of employees — about 50 workers in its least-paid "residential counselor" classification — but managed to do it in a way that broke federal labor law. When workers vote to unionize, they're saying they want to negotiate an agreement on wages and working conditions, and not have those things dictated to them by man-

agement. But after VOA workers voted to unionize, VOA informed residential counselors (who were making as little as \$10 to \$12 an hour) that it was making a unilateral decision to give them a \$3 to \$5 an hour increase, without negotiating that with the union. That's not only improper; it's a violation of the National Labor Relations Act,

which requires employers to negotiate terms of employment in good faith. AFSCME filed charges, and the National Labor Relations Board facilitated a "slap on the wrist" settlement: VOA would post a notice promising not to do that again.

The workers have gotten moral support from several elected representatives. House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson and state rep Rob Nosse took part in a union forum in December. And Shemia Fagan, a former state rep and current state senate candidate, showed up at an April 25 union demonstration to deliver a message of support.

"We're fighting for 'fair share,' which is something we decided we wanted overwhelmingly with a vote two years ago," said VOA employee Sean Luke at the protest, which took place outside Portland VOA headquarters at 3910 SE Stark as the two sides met inside to negotiate. "So far, they refuse to recognize that."

No further negotiation sessions are scheduled.

Which Labor Unions have endorsed Val Hoyle for Labor Commissioner?











...ALL of them

*Partial list of endorsements





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Val Hoyle for Labor Commissioner