

# NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

## IN THIS ISSUE

HOW CONGRESS CREATED THE PENSION CRISIS ...  
and how Congress can fix it. | Page 3

PORTLAND FIRE FIGHTERS UNION TURNS 100  
Senator Merkley presents a flag from the Capitol. | Page 8

Meeting Notices p. 4      Unionization elections p. 7

VOLUME 119, NUMBER 10

PORTLAND, OREGON

MAY 18, 2018

## RETIREMENT

# Pension crisis sparks reform debate

Over a million union members are in pension funds that are headed for insolvency. But unions are not united about what to do about it.

By Don McIntosh

By 6:15 p.m., pickup trucks and cars snaked along NE 162nd Avenue in Portland waiting to turn into a complex of Teamsters union buildings. Near the union hall entrance, co-workers socialized in small groups or lined up to sign a petition. By 6:30, May 2, about 150 Teamsters were in their seats, and the meeting got under way with the pledge of allegiance. Chuck Mack, the man they came to hear, took the microphone.

Mack is co-chair of America's largest multi-employer pension fund. The Western Conference of Teamsters Pension Trust, with 591,619 partic-



**DON'T MESS WITH OUR PENSIONS:** Teamsters lined up to sign petitions opposing the GROW Act, a bill in Congress that its critics say would shift the risk of pension investments to workers.

ipants concentrated in 13 Western states, has paid guaranteed monthly benefits to retired Teamsters since its founding in 1955. Its investments lost 20 percent of their value in the 2008-2009 financial crash, but bounced back by the end of 2017. But today, its fate is

linked to the failing Central States Teamster pension plan, America's fourth largest multi-employer pension. The Central States pension is projected to run out of money in six years. Its collapse won't just be a dis-

Turn to Page 2

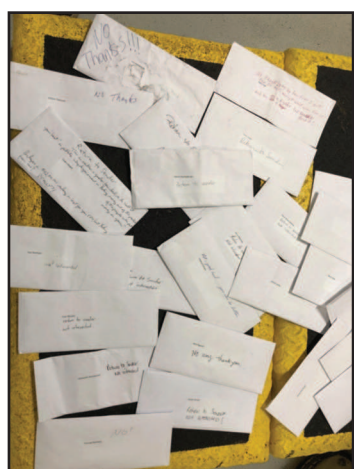
# Nabisco's final final offer: \$15k signing bonus

By Don McIntosh

To end a two-year contract standoff with about 2,000 union members at its six Nabisco bakeries in the United States, Mondelez International is offering to triple its proposed contract ratification bonus to \$15,000 per employee. All workers would have to do to get that money is ... let the company withdraw from their union's pension plan and reduce their health insurance benefit.

It's a limited-time-only offer, Mondelez labor relations director Pamela DiStefano said in an April 25 letter to Bakery Confectionery Tobacco and Grain Millers (BCTGM) vice president Jethro Head. The offer expires at midnight May 20.

Is the company planning to impose its own contract offer after that? Laurie M. Guzzinati, Mondelez Global LLC's senior director for corporate and government affairs for North America, wouldn't say, but said



**GIVE UP OUR PENSION FOR \$15,000? NO THANKS!** At the Portland Nabisco bakery, a letter from the plant manager about a company contract offer got a chilly reaction. Union members wrote "Return to Sender," "No thanks!!!!" and other messages on the unopened envelopes.

in an email to the *Labor Press* that more than two years have passed since the previous contracts expired.

"During this time, the BCTGM has not allowed our

employees the opportunity to vote on our offer," Guzzinati wrote.

BCTGM — which has rejected company proposals to withdraw from the pension — declined to respond to the Mondelez offer to triple the ratification bonus. That's when the company began contacting employees directly, in what would appear to be a violation of federal labor law. Employers aren't supposed to negotiate directly with workers if they're union-represented. But Mondelez, in letters and meetings with workers, is pitching the tripled bonus and urging them to put pressure on the union to allow a vote on it.

"[I] urge you to ask ... your union representatives for the opportunity to vote as soon as possible on the company's offer," Portland bakery general manager Jan Beunder wrote in a May 3 letter to employees.

Turn to Page 7



## UNION ORGANIZING

# Yes, welders can unionize at Precision Castparts, NLRB rules

A group of 100 highly skilled welders at Precision Castparts Corp. (PCC) can have a union after all, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has ruled.

The Portland-area welders voted 54 to 38 to join the Machinists union on Sept. 22, 2017, but Precision Castparts filed a legal appeal with the NLRB, arguing that a welders-only bargaining unit wouldn't be appropriate, because the welders work in 18 separate departments at three separate campuses.

When workers seek to union-

ize, the NLRB determines which of their co-workers do and don't belong in their proposed bargaining unit, if employer and union don't agree about that. Under federal law, units can include all of an employer's workers, those at a particular location or department, or those in a particular craft specialty.

PCC said the only appropriate unit would consist of all 2,500 Portland-area workers. No doubt it argued that because

Turn to Page 7

# Gladstone Burgerville becomes the second store to vote in union

In ballots counted May 13, workers at the Gladstone Burgerville restaurant at 19119 SE McLoughlin Blvd. voted 17 to 5 to unionize with the Burgerville Workers Union, which is affiliated with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).

That marks the second win for the grassroots union in an election administered by the National Labor Relations Board. The first was the store at South-

east 92nd and Powell Boulevard in Portland, which voted "Union Yes" by 18 to 4 on April 23 — becoming the first officially unionized fast food restaurant in the United States. The union and company management have set May 22 as the date for their first bargain-

ing session for the 92nd Avenue store. The union is calling on members of the public to boycott the company until it signs a fair union contract.

