

UNION ORGANIZING

OHSU grad students unionize with AFSCME

Graduate student teaching and research assistants at Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU) submitted a petition for union recognition to the Oregon Employment Relations Board on Aug. 29. A clear majority of the 250 students signed authorization cards designating Oregon AFSCME as their union.

Graduate students conduct valuable research, but many feel

more could be done to support their struggling colleagues.

“We’re building our union because we want to be recognized and respected for our work,” said Breanna Caruso, a second year graduate-employee in the Cell, Developmental & Cancer Biology Program, in a union press statement. “We’re not just advancing our education, we’re producing tangible

contributions that benefit the university. It’s time that graduate students were fairly compensated for the value of our work.”

Once the union petition is certified, students will prepare to meet with OHSU administrators to discuss a host of ongoing issues, including equity and diversity on campus, available mental health services, and more.

THE ANTI-UNION OPPOSITION

Trump-pardoned felon will raise anti-union funds

Far-right culture warrior Dinesh D’Souza — a campaign finance felon who received a Trump presidential pardon — will headline a \$115-a-plate fundraiser for the union group Freedom Foundation. Freedom Foundation is set up as a tax-deductible educational/charitable non-profit. But the group’s reason for existence — “making life miserable for government employee unions,” as a group spokesperson once put it — doesn’t sound like a mission most people would recognize as a charitable cause. It’s funded by an array of right-wing foundations set up by billionaires and millionaires. Freedom Foundation uses public records requests and legal action to obtain public

employee union membership lists, and then follows up with mailings, phone calls, and in-person visits to union members’ workplaces and homes to try to get them to drop their union membership.

Freedom Foundation staffers are positively giddy with a June 2018 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court. In the *Janus v. AFSCME* case, the court made “right to work” the law of the land for public sector workplaces, in that no public employees can be required to pay anything to the union that bargains and defends their contract.

D’Souza and the Freedom Foundation will be celebrating the decision at the fundraiser, to-

gether with government workers who have successfully opted out of union fees.

In 2014, D’Souza was sentenced to eight months in jail, five years probation and a \$30,000 fine after pleading guilty to a felony violation of a federal campaign finance law. The law limits contributions to \$5,000 from any individual to any one candidate, but D’Souza tried to get around that by giving \$25,000 in the names of five other people.

D’Souza is now promoting a movie he produced that compares Democrats to Nazis.

Seattle-area labor unionists are planning to picket the Sept. 28 event, which will take place at the Hilton in Bellevue, Washington.

... An end to NAFTA?

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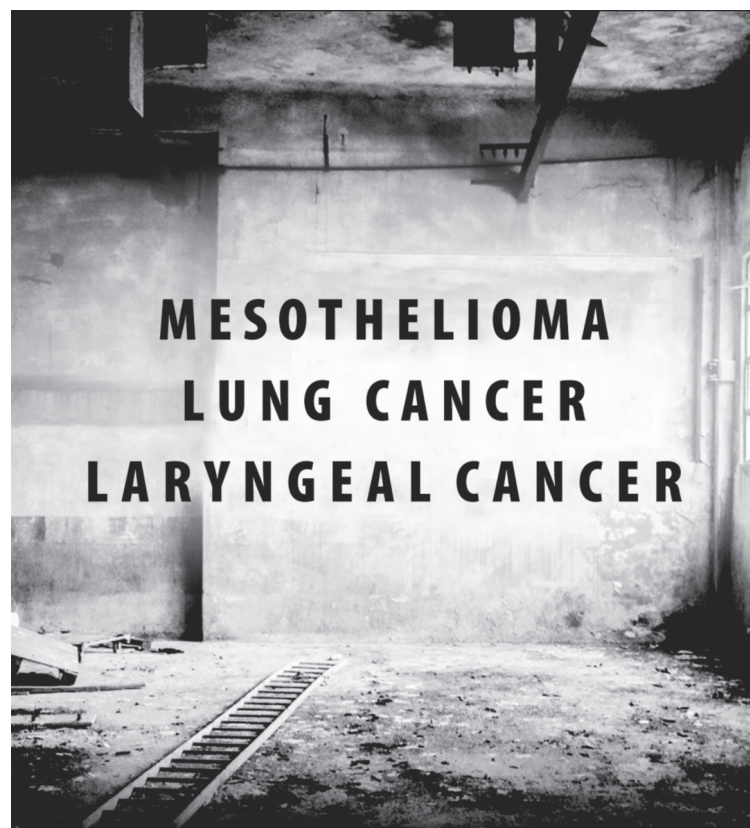
softwood lumber exports, but there’s little basis to support Trump’s allegation of “abuse” in the relationship. In fact, the United States has had slight trade surpluses with Canada in every year but one since NAFTA took effect in 1994.

Canada’s economy is even more tightly entwined with the U.S. economy than Mexico’s, particularly in sectors like automotive. And the two are close enough legally and polit-

ically that many U.S.-headquartered unions have Canadian locals. Canadian locals are what explains the “international” in the name of most American unions, as well as the custom of referring to the top-level union bodies as “internationals.”

Whatever final deal is worked out, Trump will have to formally submit to Congress, which would schedule an up-or-down vote on it 90 days later.

— Don McIntosh



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