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JOBS

Private monopolies failed to deliver fiber. Now it's time for municipal broadband.

By Don McIntosh

In the Willamette Valley, you have two choices if you want high-speed Internet access: cable monopoly Comcast or telephone landline monopoly CenturyLink. For decades, without ever investing in fiber-optic cables to residents' homes, the two monopolies have ratcheted up the rent on their legacy coaxial cables and twisted copper wires, all while confusing customers with complicated package deals and temporary introductory rates — and maintaining legendarily poor customer service. It's no wonder giant cable and telephone providers are consistently ranked among the most hated companies in-



AFSCME officer Michael Hanna pitched Troutdale City Council a plan to study providing high-speed Internet as a public utility. It passed 5-0.

America. But what are you gonna do about it?

Now, coming soon to Portland City Council, is a union-backed plan for public-owned Internet

access that would be cheaper than Comcast and 40 times as fast. Not only that, but it would pay for it-

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PEOPLE

The new face of Oregon's building trades

Robert Camarillo, the new leader of Oregon's construction unions, is a 41-year-old first generation American with the heart of an organizer.

By Don McIntosh

Twelve years ago, Robert Camarillo was a full-time structural iron worker active in Iron Workers Local 29. This August, union delegates elected him to the top office of the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council, which represents the interests of 25,000 construction workers in 21 building trades unions.

Camarillo, 41, is its new full-time executive secretary, responsible for advancing the Council's wide-ranging agenda — from promoting all-union project labor agreements to fostering more opportunities for women, minorities, and veterans to enter the trades, and cracking down on employer theft of wages. Camarillo can speak with authority about wage theft, because he himself experienced it as a young construction worker.

The son of immigrants from



Mexico, Camarillo was born and spent his early childhood in Southern California. He moved to Oregon in the early 1990s. After becoming a father at a young age, he went to work in construction to provide for his family.

Drawn to the idea of working on bridges, he wanted to be an iron worker. In 1997, he reached

out to Iron Workers Local 29 about their apprenticeship program, but became discouraged when he was told they weren't taking applications.

Building trades unions can sometimes be like a big family; many have proud traditions of

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COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Washington teacher strikes end with double digit raises

The last of seven Southwest Washington teacher strikes ended Sept. 17 when teachers in Battle Ground began their strike settlement was reached one day after they voted by 89 percent to defy a judge's order to return to work. The strike in Battle Ground



lasted 13 school days, making it the longest of 15 teacher strikes that took place in Washington this year. Teachers at East Vancouver's Evergreen School District ended their strike Sept. 10, and teachers at Longview ended theirs Sept. 11.

At the height of the strike wave, as many as 8,000 Washington teachers were walking picket lines — 5,000 of them in Southwest Washington. Teach-

ers struck in districts where superintendents tried to hold on to funds the Legislature had granted for long-overdue

teacher raises: Battle Ground, Longview, Vancouver, Washougal, Ridgefield, Hockinson, and Evergreen. In the end, all the struck Southwest Washing-

ton districts agreed to raises of over 10 percent.

Teacher unity was overwhelming in every district. Strike votes, and later contract ratification votes, passed with over 90 percent support, even unanimously in some cases. And teachers found massive public support on picket lines and rallies like the one that filled Vancouver's Esther Short park Sept. 7.

A HUNDRED YEARS OF BUILDING OREGON

Operating Engineers Local 701 celebrates its centennial

Oregon was a very different place when the International Union of Steam Operating Engineers chartered a new local Sept. 18, 1918, to represent "hoisting, portable and shipyard engineers" in Portland — Local 701. A Spanish Flu epidemic forced founding members to wait months to elect officers. [It took the lives of half a million Americans, 1 in every 200.] The gas powered shovel had only just been invented in 1914. Steam power ran the engines of the day. It wouldn't be until 1920 that caterpillar tracks were added to tractors, made at first of wood and tin plate. And in those days, no women or blacks were permitted to become members. To become a member of Local 701, you had to know someone: Four members had to sign for you.

In fact, six years before Local 701 was chartered, delegates to the international union convention had hotly debated whether to grant membership to firemen — the workers who fed the fires that heated the boilers that powered the steam engines. They let them in, but grudgingly. In 701 as in other Operating Engineers locals, firemen and oilers — workers who greased the equipment and changed oil in gear heads or conveyors — were given entry but assigned to "branch locals" with no voting rights. [They wouldn't get full voting rights until 1960.]

Local 701 has come along way in 100 years. Diesel engines replaced steam boilers, and hydraulics replaced cable machinery. The international

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