

Guest Opinion

By Mike Bridges President, Kelso/Longview Building Trades Council



West Coast aligned against new coal terminal

As a labor leader and a resident of the Longview-Kelso area, I have supported the Millennium Bulk Export Terminals project since the company arrived in 2011 and negotiated a Project Labor Agreement with our Building Trades Council. The majority of the community hoped that this facility, which would create 2,650 local family-wage construction jobs as well as 300 permanent jobs, and provide ongoing economic benefits through increased tax revenue, would be fully operational by now. But because the project would ship coal, it has endured the most extensive project review in the history of Washington State.

I think a thorough review is appropriate for all projects, but that review also needs to be fair, consistent, and timely. What Millennium has been subjected to is far beyond the normal scope of the permitting process and has resulted in a water permit being denied not because of water quality concerns, but because of increased rail and ship traffic.

This conflict over the project review process prompted project funder, Lighthouse Resources, to sue the Governor and the state, claiming the state violated the

U.S. Constitution's Commerce Clause. This small but vital part of the Constitution gives Congress the power to "regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several states." It prohibits states from restricting the ability of other states to trade freely, while also ensuring that the U.S. is a reliable trading partner.

Last spring, the National Association of Manufacturers, along with six landlocked states (Montana, Wyoming, Utah, South Dakota, Kansas and Nebraska) filed friend-of-the-court briefs in support of the project and Lighthouse Resources. Those states understood the potential harm of essential trade being restricted just because of the commodity being shipped. But this August, six states — California, Oregon, Maryland, New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts — all filed briefs in support of the denial of Millennium's permit. In effect, Washington, Oregon and California are trying to form a wall that could prevent landlocked states from shipping their goods out of the West Coast, depending on the product. This could be harmful for workers and businesses throughout the country.

I continue to support this project be-

cause the results of this permitting process could create not only a trade wall, but a wall for future infrastructure projects. Investors may think twice before moving forward with projects in Washington State, having seen what Millennium has been through. If Millennium is now the standard against which other projects will be judged, it doesn't paint a bright picture for growth in Washington, nor for the prosperity of our Brothers and Sisters in Labor and the communities in which we live.

I also continue to support Millennium because they have proven to be a good community partner and a quality employer. I want more companies like Millennium to choose Washington State, not drive them away with a biased permitting process. I hope you will join me in supporting Millennium, and please watch for opportunities to make your voice heard for a fair process.

Mike Bridges is president of the Longview/Kelso Building and Construction Trades Council, and is a business rep. for IBEW Local 48.

UNION DEMOCRACY

Melissa Unger wins election at SEIU 503

Longtime political organizer Melissa Unger outpolled two challengers to win election as executive director of Oregon's largest union, Service Employees International Union



Local 503. Unger, age 38, was appointed by the union executive board to the post in March after the resignation of Brian Rudiger. In mail ballots counted Sept. 27, Unger got 1,515 votes, compared to 709 for home care worker Holly Garland and 623 for child abuse hotline worker Shamus Cooke, chief steward at the Oregon Department of Human Services. Voter turnout was 5 percent.

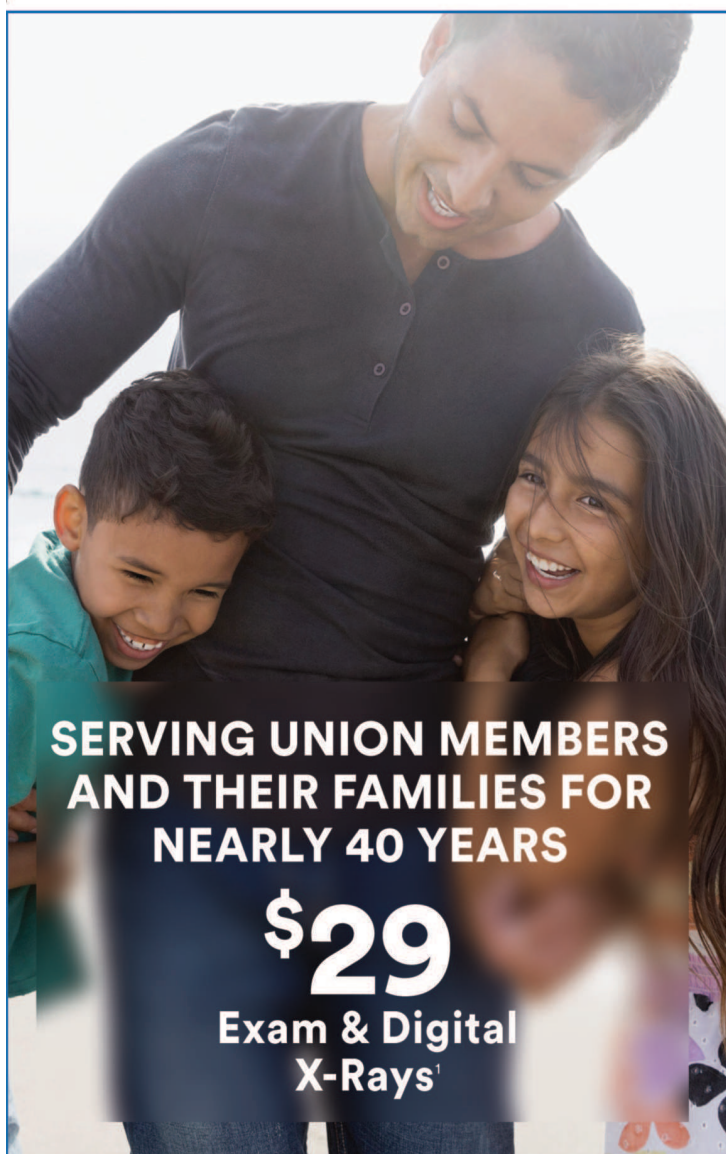
As executive director, Unger oversees about 140 union staff who work on behalf of over 58,000 union members — state and local government workers, and non-profit and home care workers. Unger came to Local 503 in 2007 as a political organizer, left for a six-month stint with the Oregon House Democrats in 2011, and then directed SEIU's Oregon State Council before becoming Local 503 political director in June 2014.

Unger ran together with incumbent union president Steven Demarest, who was also elected, turning back a challenge from home care worker Avery Horton.

Members also elected members of the union Executive Board by industry sector and by region as well as the following statewide officers:

- **Vice President:** Homecare worker Rebecca Sandoval outpolled fellow home care worker Echo Stickland, state child welfare worker Guillermo Romero, and Oregon Department of Education employee Blake Whitson.
- **Secretary:** University of Oregon employee Theodora Ko Thompson outpolled home care worker Nannett Carter-Jafri.
- **Treasurer:** Department of Revenue employee Mary Stewart ran unopposed

All offices are for two year terms.



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